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The Financial Explosion

THE EDITORS

Nicaragua: The Strategy of Counterrevolution

WILLIAM I. ROBINSON
KENT NORSWORTHY

Big Mac and the Tropical Forest

JOSEPH K. SKINNER

Reviews by Cornel West, Cheryl Payer, Annette T. Rubinstein

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EDITORS: Paul M. Sweezy Harry Magdoff Leo Huberman (1903-1968)

NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

Since writing the notes for this space in last month's issue, both editors attended the tenth annual "Socialism in the World" roundtable which has been held every year since 1975 in Cavtat (near Dubrovnik), Yugoslavia. The dates this year were October 21-25, and the papers we prepared for the occasion were published in last summer's double issue of MR ("Are There Economic Laws of Socialism?" by Harry Magdoff, and "After Capitalism—What?" by Paul Sweezy). What is unique, and also uniquely useful, about the Cavtat roundtables is that they bring together some two hundred socialists of many kinds and persuasions from all over the world, East, West, North, and South (including the USSR and Eastern Europe, China, Western Europe, North America, Latin America, and Africa). No one but the Yugoslavs could organize such ecumenical gatherings of the left, and it is very much to their credit that despite many difficulties over the years they (under the tireless leadership of our good friend Miloš Nikolić) have not only persisted but have raised the

(Continued on inside back cover)

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THE FINANCIAL EXPLOSION

Credit where credit is due. For a long time now we have been harping in this space on the theme of a monetary system out of control; of the wild proliferation of new financial institutions, instruments, and markets; of the unchecked spread of a speculative fever certainly more pervasive and perhaps even more virulent than any recorded in the long history of capitalism's get-rich-quick obsessions. With few exceptions, accredited economists, as is their wont, have ignored these bizarre goings-on: they are not part of the way the economy is supposed to operate and are hence unworthy of "scientific" attention. The media, on the other hand, especially the serious business press, have reported the facts as they have unfolded—the rapid growth of options and futures markets, the near bankruptcy and rescue by the government of one of the country's largest banks, etc., etc.—but have generally steered clear of any attempt to put these discrete developments into a coherent account of an enormously powerful dynamic process rooted in the nature of the economic system and loaded with implications for the country's future.

Now, very much to its credit, *Business Week* has broken ranks and made a serious attempt to fill the gap. The result, a cover story entitled "The Casino Society" in its issue of September 16, is a noteworthy journalistic achievement. Colorfully written and packed with facts, it tells an exciting story well worth the careful attention of everyone interested in understanding the current economic scene.

What is the casino society? Here, in an introduction (included on the cover of the magazine) is *Business Week's* shorthand answer:

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No, it's not Las Vegas or Atlantic City. It's the U.S. financial system. The volume of transactions has boomed far beyond anything needed to support the economy. Borrowing—politely called leverage—is getting out of hand. And futures enable people to play the market without owning a share of stock. The result: the system is tilting from investment to speculation.

Data in support of these statements are focused on the expansion in the volume of financial transactions. A composite quotation can serve as a summary:

On the NYSE [New York Stock Exchange], 108 million shares change hands daily, up from 49 million five years ago. In the government securities market, trading volume is averaging $76 billion a day, quadrupling 1980's level. Yet this growth seems tame compared with the action in financial futures and options trading pits. For example, daily volume in Treasury-bond and T-bill futures tripled in 1984 alone, to $26 billion. . . . The volume of financial transactions in this country has soared beyond calculation—and beyond economic purpose. . . . Stocks are not greatly overpriced, and margin borrowing is modest [in contrast to 1929]. But the speculative use of debt and other forms of leverage is pandemic in the rest of the financial world. "The markets," says NYSE Chairman John J. Phelan, "are leveraged to the teeth." Washington, of course, is setting an unrivalled standard of profligacy, running a $180-billion annual budget deficit. Total federal debt doubled during the 1970s and hit $1 trillion in 1981, the Reagan administration's first year. Next year, it will top $2 trillion. Meanwhile, borrowing is surging all across the economy. Total debt of households, corporations, and governments jumped by a postwar record of 14 percent, to $7.1 trillion, in 1984. That's considerably faster than the economy is growing. Credit-market debt now stands at an ominous 1.95 times GNP, compared with 1.68 a decade ago. [Moreover, there is a vast debt equivalent which doesn't show on anyone's books.] Barred by law from underwriting mutual funds or commercial paper, the big banks have been retaliating against Wall Street's incursions by offering corporate clients liquidity in the form of commitments—to make loans, to buy or sell foreign currency, or to guarantee the obligations of a creditor. Banks can charge tidy fees for making these commitments and yet not set aside capital to back them up, as they would loans. At the end of 1984 these "off-balance-sheet liabilities" at the 15 largest banks totaled $930 billion, or about 8 percent more than their assets.

Here, then, are the kind of figures which, taken together, give an idea of the fantastic dimensions of the financial explo-

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sion that has taken place in the United States in the last decade or so.*

On the question of what it all means—i.e., of the relation of the financial explosion to the performance of the economy as a whole—the *Business Week* story has little to contribute beyond dark hints and ominous warnings of unknown perils that lie ahead. But the editors of the magazine, in an accompanying editorial, show that they are fully aware of the problem, and their way of formulating it has the merit of pointing toward the kind of analysis that is needed: "Although the emergence of the casino society," they write, "coincided with the economy's prolonged slowdown in the mid-1970s, nobody can demonstrate which is the chicken and which the egg. But clearly, slow growth and today's rampant speculative binge are locked in some kind of symbiotic embrace." What we need to know is the nature of this embrace.

It is necessary to rule out at the outset a frequently encountered notion that what we are now witnessing is simply the most recent of a long series of speculative manias that have punctuated the history of capitalism since at least the famous "South Sea Bubble" of 1720. Beginning as long ago as the 1820s, speculative excesses of this kind became a normal feature of the capitalist business cycle, getting under way in the later stages of the boom and foreshadowing the panic and collapse to come. It was, in fact, the regular recurrence of this pattern in the United States that, after the panic of 1907, led to the establishment of the Federal Reserve System. The present situation, however, is very far from being an end-of-the-boom phenomenon. Its origins can plausibly be dated even earlier than the mid-1970s, and it has been more or less steadily building up ever since. This being also the period when economic stagnation set in after the long postwar upswing of the 1950s and 1960s, we

* The whole phenomenon can be approached from a wider angle, focusing not only on the volume of financial transactions but also on the rapid expansion—relative as well as absolute—of the financial sector of the economy in terms of real resources (employment and capital investment). See "Production and Finance" (this space, MR, May 1983) where some rough estimates of this kind are attempted. We will return to this aspect of the problem below.

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evidently need to identify a causal mechanism different from the one that characterized the prewar business cycle.

The problem in our view, can be divided into two parts. First, why did the stagnation that had dominated the economy in the 1930s return in the 1970s? And, second, why, in the conditions of the 1970s, did a stagnant economy become a breeding ground for a financial explosion?

These are of course questions that in one form or another have been dealt with many times in these pages. Here we will only touch on the main points that need to be kept in mind.

First—and in a sense the real crux of the whole matter—in a mature monopoly capitalist society there is always a strong tendency to stagnation. In some historical contexts this tendency takes over and dominates the economic scene, while in others it is held at bay and the economy experiences a long wave of expansion punctuated only by brief and mild recessions. The period beginning at the end of the Second World War was an example par excellence of the latter kind. Why was this so?*

The answer is that the war altered the givens of the world economic situation in ways that vastly expanded the scope of profitable investment opportunities. The main factors were as follows: (1) the pressing need to make good wartime damage; (2) the existence of an enormous potential demand for goods and services the production of which had been eliminated or greatly reduced during the war (houses, automobiles, appliances, etc.); (3) a huge pool of purchasing power accumulated during the war by firms and individuals which could be used to transform potential into effective demand; (4) the establishment of U.S. global hegemony as a result of the war: the U.S. dollar became the basis of the international monetary system, prewar trade and currency blocs were dismantled, and the conditions for relatively free capital movements were created—all of which served to fuel an enormous expansion of international trade; (5) civilian spinoffs from military technology, especially electronics and jet planes; and (6) the build-up by the United States of a huge permanent armaments industry, spurred on by

* What follows is taken, with minor modifications, from "Why Stagnation?" in this space, June 1982.

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major regional wars in Korea and Indochina. Very important but too often overlooked is the fact that these developments were in due course reflected in a fundamental change in the business climate. The pessimism and caution left over from the 1930s was not dissipated immediately, but when it became clear that the postwar boom had much deeper roots than merely repairing the damages and losses of the war itself, the mood changed into one of long-run optimism. A great investment boom in all the essential industries of a modern capitalist society was triggered: steel, autos, energy, ship-building, chemicals, and many more. Capacity was rapidly built up in the leading capitalist countries and in a few of the more advanced nations of the third world like Mexico, Brazil, India, and South Korea.

In seeking the causes of the reemergence of stagnation in the 1970s, the crucial point to keep in mind is that every one of the forces that powered the long postwar expansion was, and was bound to be, self-limiting. This is indeed part of the very nature of investment: it not only responds to a demand, it also satisfies the demand. Wartime damage was repaired. Demand deferred during the war was satisfied. The process of building up new industries (including a peacetime arms industry) requires a lot more investment than maintaining them. Expanding industrial capacity always ends up by creating *over*capacity: a strong incentive to invest generates a burst of investment which in turn undermines the incentive to invest. This is the secret of the long postwar boom and of the return of stagnation in the 1970s.

We turn now to the second part of the problem at issue: why, in the conditions of the 1970s, did a stagnant economy become the breeding ground for a financial explosion?

The answer here is more complicated than the answer to the return-to-stagnation question, but its main elements—even if not their specific form of interaction or ranking in order of importance—are clear enough. To begin with, the financial sector of the economy which had been moribund in the 1930s and under tight control throughout the war experienced a vigorous growth during the next three decades. Between 1945 and 1975, while the GNP grew by a factor of 7.3 (reflecting price infla-

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tion as well as real growth), the debt of nonfinancial business firms and consumers increased 19 times, with the bellwether interest rate on 3-month treasury bills rising from 0.375 percent to 5.8 percent. Up to about 1960, this expansion of the financial sector was pretty much in step with, and basically resulted from, the long postwar upswing in the underlying economy. After that, especially under the stimulus of the Vietnam war, the financial sector began to grow more rapidly than the economy as a whole. Already in 1975 we wrote in this space, "The specter haunting today's capitalist world is the possible collapse of its financial institutions and an associated world economic crisis." ("Banks: Skating on Thin Ice," February 1975) Against this background, what should we expect the consequences to be of the relapse into stagnation signalled by the severe recession of 1973-75?

In this connection we must remember that banks and other financial businesses, being capitalist institutions, operate under the same growth imperatives as do industrial corporations. They are spurred on by competition and the drive to expand the profit base. Since the commodity they deal in is money, the key to growth and higher profit lies in marketing an ever larger volume of debt. And if one source of demand for financing falters, they naturally work all the harder to cultivate others. So it was that with the slowdown of industrial investment as the long postwar wave subsided, the financial sector intensified the hunt which has continued to this day for alternative customers. It was no accident that it was just about at this time that U.S. banks started shovelling out funds abroad, especially to third world countries, many of which, as we now know, were seduced into taking on vastly more debt than they would ever be able to service, let alone repay.

But the money-pushers were busy at home as well as abroad, and it wasn't long before the debt-creation process took on the character of a self-contained operation, with financial institutions (and wealthy individuals) playing leading roles on both sides of the market, i.e., as both suppliers and demanders. How this works is perhaps best illustrated by the rapid growth of money-market funds, which got their start by offering higher

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interest rates than banks, with a resulting flood of money from the banks to the funds. The banks then raised their rates to get deposits back. Billions of dollars worth of back-and-forth financial transactions thus pushed up interest rates without any relation to the underlying production and circulation of useful goods and services. Other examples of the proliferation of purely financial transactions are legion: most of the multi-billion-dollar activity in the area of corporate mergers and acquisitions is of this type, as indeed is the great bulk of speculative trading in markets specialized to an ever widening spectrum of negotiable assets: commodities, foreign exchange, stocks and bonds, futures and options (even options on futures!), and so on and on. The crucial point, and one that is almost totally missing from traditional economic discourse, is that the financial sphere has the potential to become an autonomous subsystem of the economy as a whole, with an enormous capacity for self-expansion.

Once the expansion process gets fully under way, as it was bound to do in the context of the reappearance of stagnation in the 1970s, it tends to feed on itself: like a cancer, it lacks internal control mechanisms. The only way it can be brought under control is through external intervention. In the case of cancer this may take the form of surgery or radiation or drugs; in the case of the financial system the only possibility is government intervention. But with the economy slowing down, governments, far from being interested in putting on the financial brakes, or even looking to the condition of the braking system with a view to future use, were concerned to facilitate financial expansion in the belief that this was one way, and perhaps the most effective way, of countering stagnation.

Thus federal deficits, reflecting the government's generally expansionist policies, practically tripled, from an annual average of $13.6 billion in 1970-74 to $39.4 billion in the next five years (and again to $116.6 billion in 1980-84!). And whenever the debt expansion process showed signs of stalling, either because of restrictive laws and regulations dating back to the days of the New Deal and the Second World War or because of a threatened failure of a big bank or corporation that could trigger a chain reaction of bankruptcies, the authorities came to the rescue

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by reinterpreting the laws and relaxing the regulations and/or by emergency injection of money by the Federal Reserve to endangered banks or by government subsidies, loans, or loan guarantees to ailing firms or industries. These actions in turn broadened the base for a renewed expansion of debt and greater dependence of the economy as a whole on the ballooning of credit.

If the foregoing analysis is accepted, certain conclusions follow.

First, the financial explosion has in fact been a force counteracting stagnation. Not of course that it has done away with stagnation but in the more limited sense that without it stagnation would have been worse. There are two reasons for this: (1) The expansion of the financial sector has opened up significant opportunities for profitable investment in office buildings, transportation and communications equipment, business machines, etc.* (2) The sharp increase in interest income associated with the financial explosion—net interest rose from 6.5 percent of national income in 1974 to 9.6 percent in 1984—plus the enormous profits raked in by Wall Street and its lesser counterparts around the country have acted as an important stimulus to consumption, especially in the booming area of luxury goods and services. Without these props to both investment and consumption, the performance of the economy these past few years would certainly have been much worse than it actually was.

Let us pause to ponder the meaning of these facts. Conventional wisdom has it that financial excesses of the kind we have been discussing that recur every so often in capitalist societies are deplorable aberrations that corrupt people, waste resources, and disrupt the normal functioning of the economy. As the *Business Week* editorial on the casino society puts it: "The case can be made that the casino society channels far too much talent and energy into financial shell games rather than into producing real goods and services, and that it is a significant drag on eco-

* As demonstrated in the October Review of the Month, these are precisely the areas of buoyant capital formation in the economic recovery of the early 1980s.

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nomic growth." On analysis, however, this turns out to be a much more complicated statement than may appear at first sight.

Does the casino society in fact channel far too much talent and energy into financial shell games? Yes, of course. No sensible person could deny it. Does it do so at the expense of producing real goods and services? Absolutely not. There is no reason whatever to assume that if you could deflate the financial structure, the talent and energy now employed there would move into productive pursuits. They would simply become unemployed and add to the country's already huge reservoir of idle human and material resources. Is the casino society a significant drag on economic growth? Again, absolutely not. What growth the economy has experienced in recent years, apart from that attributable to an unprecedented peacetime military build-up, has been almost entirely due to the financial explosion.

We can now see why, though everyone deplores the increasingly outrageous excesses of the financial explosion and is aware of its inherent dangers, nothing is being done—or even seriously proposed—to bring it under control. Quite the contrary: every time a catastrophe threatens, the authorities spring into action to put out the fire—and in the process spread more inflammable material around for the next flare-up to feed on. The reason is simply that if the explosion were brought under control, even assuming that it could be done without triggering a chain reaction of bankruptcies, the overall economy would be sent into a tailspin. The metaphor of the man with a tiger by the tail fits the case to a tee.

Where is it all leading? Or perhaps the question should be reformulated: What alternative scenarios make sense as we try to peer into what is at best a very murky future?

First, a bust of classic dimensions. This indeed has been a plausible outcome for a long time, and there have been at least half a dozen occasions since the recession of 1973-75 when it seemed on the verge of happening. The remarkable thing about this scenario, however, is not that it could happen but that it

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hasn't. And the reason of course is that the government has always successfully intervened to keep it from happening. We have now reached a situation in which (in the words of *Business Week*) "the financial system is more dependent than ever on swift intervention by government authorities to forestall disaster."

Continued successful intervention cannot be taken for granted but neither can it be ruled out. And this suggests a plausible alternative scenario that ought to be given serious attention. What would be the long-run implications of government's undertaking to guarantee the financial system against the kind of collapse and generalized deflation that was the prelude to the Great Depression of the 1930s?

We don't know the answer, nor do we know of any attempt by others to provide one. Perhaps even raising the question in this form at the present stage is premature: more experience may be needed before the elements of an answer can begin to fall into place. But discussion is certainly in order, and we would be glad to hear the ideas of any readers who are convinced, as we are, that sooner or later—and perhaps sooner rather than later—the left in this country is going to be forced by events to define a position on this and related questions.

(October 12, 1985)

When wealth is wrought as seasons roll,
  From off the fruitful soil,
When luxury, from pole to pole,
  Reaps fruits of human toil;
When, for a thousand, one alone
  In plenty rolls along,
And others only gnaw the bone,
  There must be something wrong.

Factory Girls' Album (1847)

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NICARAGUA: THE STRATEGY OF COUNTERREVOLUTION

by WILLIAM I. ROBINSON and KENT NORSWORTHY

On July 19, 1979, the Sandinista National Liberation Front marched triumphantly into Managua. Over 50,000 people had given their lives in the war to overthrow the Somoza dictatorship, whose fifty dark years had left the country in ruins. The Nicaraguan people believed the nightmare was over, and that they could finally build a new, more just society in peace. Yet within months of the triumph the United States was beating the war drums against Nicaragua. It has continued to do so, with increasing intensity, ever since.

Although, as we shall show in what follows, U.S. strategy in its war against Nicaragua has evolved, its policy has always been the same: at the core of the U.S. objective in the region is the destruction of the Sandinista People's Revolution. Carter administration policy, reflecting the general defensive character of an imperialism still limping from the Vietnam experience, deferred the military option in favor of attempts at undermining postrevolutionary consolidation through economic and diplomatic pressures alone. But as Washington moved from the defensive to the offensive—expressed in the advent of the Reagan admin-

William I. Robinson is a full-time journalist and coordinator of the economic team at the Agencia Nueva Nicaragua (ANN), the Nicaragua News Agency. Kent Norsworthy works for the Nicaraguan Institute for Social and Economic Research (INIES) as a journalist for the monthly *Pensamiento Propio*. The views expressed in this article are solely those of the authors. They are currently working on a book, *David and Goliath: The U.S. War Against Nicaragua,* which will be published by Monthly Review Press in 1986.

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istration—the military option for Nicaragua moved from a latent position to the top of the agenda. Within days of Reagan's inauguration, the CIA set about resurrecting the instrument that had protected U.S. interests in Nicaragua for fifty years, the defeated Somoza National Guard, which they then molded into a modern mercenary army under an umbrella organization, the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN).[1]

Despite Reagan's attempts to present the Nicaraguan counterrevolution as including a broad cross-section of the population, its political leadership has always been the Somocista faction of the overthrown bourgeoisie and the military elite, and its military leadership the former Somocista Guardsmen. An April 1985 Congressional report concluded that forty-six of the forty-eight positions in the FDN's command structure are held by former Guardsmen. The FDN includes about 80 percent of the total estimated 15,000 contras, and is the principal recipient of U.S. assistance.[2]

In many revolutions the ruling classes leave the country. In Nicaragua, however, the pre-victory division of the bourgeoisie into pro- and anti-Somoza factions (with the latter tactically supporting the popular insurrection), and the post-triumph Sandinista strategy of political pluralism and a mixed economy has meant that a significant sector of the former ruling class has remained inside the country, providing exceptionally fertile ground for the formation of an "internal front" of the U.S.-sponsored counterrevolution. They have organized themselves into the Nicaraguan Democratic Coordinator (CDN), comprised of four political parties, two trade union groupings under their control, and the Superior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP), a businessmen's organization that is the dominant force in the CDN coalition. The reactionary daily *La Prensa* acts as the "official organ" of the internal front, operating within the framework laid out in the U.S. army's manual of psychological warfare.

The White House envisioned a relatively rapid military victory for the counterrevolution, in an inverted version of the 1960s *foco* theory of revolution in Latin America. As one agency official involved in the program put it, Washington's timetable

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"projected month-by-month growth of the CIA-backed army up to the end of 1983, when the anti-Sandinista rebels were to march into Managua and seize power."[3] The internal front was initially relegated to a rearguard position, complementing the armed aggression with political maneuvering and ideological assaults from within "enemy" territory.

By 1982 the armed apparatus was fully in place and the aggression began to resemble modern warfare. The Revolution was unprepared, and the contras were able to take the initiative. In 1983 they launched three successive large-scale offensives, spanning hundreds of kilometers along the northern and southern borders, the Atlantic Coast region, and the central highlands. Nevertheless, the Sandinistas were able to defeat each one of these offensives, thanks to the phenomenon of "people's war": the active participation of the entire population in its own defense, be it with gun in hand in the mountains or in rearguard work in the cities. In addition to the standing army (Sandinista Peoples' Army—EPS), tens of thousands of young adults joined the Popular Militia. In the countryside, peasants organized themselves into Self-Defense and Production Cooperatives, whose members rotated between work in the fields and armed patrols to protect the communities. In Managua, factory-based workers' councils organized production so that part went to the war fronts and part was earmarked for civilian consumption.

The contras failed in every one of their objectives: seizing a piece of Nicaraguan territory and establishing a "provisional government," launching urban terrorist actions, advancing toward Managua, and sparking a right-wing insurrection. In the face of these defeats Washington resorted to a number of tactics to shore up the contra effort, including the expansion of logistical support and the direct participation of both the Honduran army and U.S. forces. The desperate attacks in October 1983 on Corinto and other Nicaraguan ports by CIA commandos were telling signs that the hope of a quick military victory was dissipating. A major turning point came in November 1983, when the CIA informed the President in a secret report, later leaked to the press, that the contras were incapable on their own of militarily defeating the Sandinistas.[4]

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Low-Intensity Warfare

The next stage of the war was a period of flux and reevaluation in Washington, in which the contras were assigned the role of waging a grinding "war of attrition" while Washington explored various formulas for moving toward a better form of intervention. The mining of Nicaragua's harbors in early 1984, and the sharp divisions within the upper echelons of the administration that it produced, epitomized the kind of maneuvering that was going on.

The objective behind the "war of attrition" was to pound away at the social and economic fabric of Nicaraguan society, thereby limiting the Revolution's ability to meet the material needs of the population and whittling away at its base of support. Once the defensive capacity of the nation was weakened, conditions would theoretically be favorable for the next step in U.S. aggression.

In essence, this war of attrition reflects the maturation of U.S. imperialism's strategy of global counterrevolution in the 1980s, and at its heart lies the concept of low-intensity warfare (LIW). LIW quickly became the favored alternative to traditional counterinsurgency practices. This strategy involves a multiplicity of prolonged political-diplomatic, economic, psychological, and ideological aggression that is synchronized with permanent but low-key military aggression. In Nicaragua, the strategy was being instituted even while fierce debates raged within the Reagan administration between its proponents and those who continued to advocate immediate invasion—preferring the costs of a military adventure to the "dangers" of ongoing revolutionary consolidation.

Following the defeat of the U.S. forces in Indochina, bewildered North American military and political analysts began a systematic evaluation of the reasons behind the U.S. failure. These analysts concluded that the United States had experienced a *tactical* victory and a *strategic* defeat, and that military superiority does not guarantee victory. In fact, like trying to kill an ant with a sledgehammer, it can be inimical to the main objectives. They argued that a new strategy for waging counterrevolution in the third world would have to be devised if the

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empire were to succeed in future conflicts, and that the need to wage counterrevolution throughout the world makes large-scale intervention in any one place risky for two reasons: (1) it weakens the capacity to act elsewhere, and (2) it generates national and international political opposition which threatens the entire worldwide offensive. They studied the theorists of revolutionary warfare, including Mao Tsetung, General Giap, and even Che Guevara, and drew on the lessons of British, French, and other colonial wars in the third world. They also reexamined the classic work of the great Prussian military theorist Karl von Clausewitz, *On War,* whose axiom that "War is the extension of politics by other means" was distilled in the new strategy.[5] They came to the conclusion that the strength of the revolutionary forces rests on their symbiotic relation with the population, and that war therefore must be a *political* not a *military* undertaking, whose strategic objective is the political defeat of the enemy rather than its military annihilation. War is thus redefined as a struggle between antagonistic alternatives (revolution and counterrevolution), with the military element only one of a number of means for attaining the newly defined objective. As Colonel John D. Waghelstein, former head of the U.S. military advisor's team in El Salvador and a leading LIW strategist has written, "LIW is "revolutionary" and counterrevolutionary warfare. It is total war at the grassroots level—one that uses all of the weapons of total war, including political, economic and psychological warfare, with the military aspect being a distant fourth in many cases."[6]

Since LIW is the diametric opposite of the invasionist line, it does not involve U.S. ground troops. There is no sudden escalation, advances are not measured in numbers of casualties or battlefield victories, the cost is low and the conflict can last as long as it takes to achieve the objective. In fact, the distinction between war and peace is obscured—because it is "total war," LIW often seems invisible.

LIW seeks first to crack the logic of the revolution, deciphering its internal cohesion and understanding the tactics it employs to advance its interests, and then to devise a strategy that will warp this logic, undoing its internal cohesion and rendering

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its tactics ineffective—in short turning the revolution against itself. LIW is extremely flexible: its tactics are made to suit the conditions of each conflict. Edward Luttwak, perhaps the foremost theorist of LIW, has described its priorities clearly: "In low intensity wars victory is normally obtained by altering the political variables to the point where the enemy becomes ineffectual, and not by actually defeating enemies in battle."[7] Without donning the eyeglasses of the LIW framework, it is not possible to understand the logic and coherence of the war against Nicaragua.

The war against Nicaragua is thus aimed at delegitimizing, isolating, and suffocating the Revolution to the point where it is no longer considered a viable political alternative in the eyes of the population. At the same time, an attempt is made to legitimate and stabilize the counterevolutionary alternative to revolution: it must develop its own internal cohesion. Not only must the revolution be invalidated but its antithesis must be validated. Once this is achieved, the counterrevolution has triumphed; all that remains is to work out the way in which state power will be transferred from the revolutionary forces to the counterrevolution.

Thus a permanent and all-sided aggression has been launched in the northern mountains of Nicaragua, in the pulpits of Managua, in the international lending agencies, in diplomatic forums, and in the U.S. media, gradually building up the terrain for either of two possibilities: the total political defeat of the Nicaraguan Revolution (which does not rule out a military element), or a future large-scale intervention, but one undertaken under much more favorable conditions—a "mopping up" operation in which an already attained victory is merely formalized (such as in Grenada).

The Nicaraguan Revolution has thus become a test case for a new strategy. For the people of Nicaragua, this means facing a perpetual state of military alert and mass mobilization, reduced possibilities of socioeconomic development, and permanent tension—a virtual war psychosis, fed by deliberate invasion scares. This is *precisely* the purpose of the LIW war.

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The Current Phase

In 1984, two developments paved the way for the third and current phase of the counterrevolution. Having lined up behind Washington's abstentionist strategy in the 1984 elections, which meant boycotting the vote and mounting an international propaganda campaign to discredit it, the political parties of the internal front lost their legitimate political space within the country, while the electoral process strengthened national social consensus around the goal of defeating the imperialists. This in turn accelerated the internal front's move to unite strategically and tactically with the armed contra forces, eliminating their operational autonomy.

Simultaneously, after two years of reorganizing the nation socially and economically in its own defense, the military balance shifted in favor of the Revolution. The Sandinistas were able to go on the offensive, and the relative stalemate was broken. According to Nicaraguan Ministry of Defense figures, the contras suffered 411 deaths in 1982, 1,824 in 1983, approximately 4,000 in 1984, and 1,300 in the first five months of 1985. In May the EPS forced the bulk of the FDN troops to retreat to their camps in southern Honduras and completely routed ARDE from the south of the country, triumphantly hoisting the Sandinista flag over Eden Pastora's long-time military headquarters in Nicaraguan territory. "The contras no longer represent a strategic danger," explained Defense Minister Comandante Humberto Ortega in early 1985. In August, Daniel Ortega announced that 1986 would be the year for "consummating the strategic defeat." The Sandinistas believe that the contras have been defeated militarily and, barring unforeseen developments, have been permanently contained. The current U.S. plan to double the number of contras and provide them with sophisticated new weaponry is not, according to the Nicaraguans, aimed at a qualitative advance, but at sustaining the capacity to remain in the battlefield.

This defeat will not, however, translate into a diminished capacity to inflict punishing socioeconomic damage, at least in the short and medium run. And there is no doubt that the military aggression has had a devastating effect: According to the Ministry of the Presidency, in addition to the more than 12,000

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deaths, direct and indirect economic losses resulting from the war are over $1.3 billion, an overwhelming amount for a country of 3 million inhabitants, one that earns less than $400 million per year in foreign exchange.

Furthermore, LIW was precisely developed for this sort of situation because it is flexible enough to allow for the rapid adoption of new forms of aggression when earlier variants decline in effectiveness. The strategic defeat of the contras has thus given rise to the ascent of the internal front. The internal forces are moving from merely complementing the military aggression to taking on responsibility for the essential task of generating a social base for a counterrevolutionary alternative to Sandinismo. The heightened importance of the internal front and the subordination of the military element are evidence of a new stage of low-intensity warfare, one in which a counterrevolutionary political program becomes a key ingredient in defeating the revolution. The contested zone has shifted from the northern mountains to the Pacific coast cities.

Nevertheless, the internal front, having lost its historic legitimacy, its control over the state, and its ideological hegemony over the masses, remains the weakest part of the counterrevolutionary apparatus. For while the hardships brought about by the war and the confusion created by the internal front's ideological obfuscation have generated discontent among a not insignificant sector of the population, these forces have not been able, thus far, to translate the discontent into active support for the counterrevolution.

Enter the Church

In the face of this the internal front has turned to the Catholic Church hierarchy—one of the most conservative in all Latin America—for ideological and political leadership. Historically a firm ally, first of Spanish colonialism, then of oligarchic rule, and later of the Somoza dynasty (the Somoza patriarch was dubbed "Prince of the Church" by one Archbishop of Managua), the Church hierarchy has from the outset been an enemy of the Revolution. Further, the Church—unlike the bourgeoisie's political institutions—has two thousand years of moral authority behind it and continues to wield great influence

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throughout the population. In fact, the Church is the only institution in Nicaragua with any real capacity for converting those discontented with the revolution into supporters of the contra project and for disputing the rest of the population's support of Sandinismo.

Thus over the past six years each time a political initiative taken by the internal front, in coordination with the armed aggresion, has faltered, the Church hierarchy has thrown out a lifeline by transferring the initiative to its own turf, where it can be converted to—or disguised as—a religious issue. A social struggle between classes is increasingly turned by the counterrevolution into a struggle between church and state—as when the Church argues that it is morally and religiously justified to resist the draft.

In the current phase of the war, however, the Church is no longer simply shoring up the beleaguered forces of the internal reaction but is assuming the leadership of the entire counterrevolution. And the Bishop of Managua, Obando y Bravo, occupies a strategic position in this phase of the war—leading to widespread suspicion that heavy U.S. pressure was behind his selection as cardinal.

The Contra Strategy: "National Reconciliation"

The theme of "national reconciliation" is the political platform upon which the internal front and the armed contras are unifying under the leadership of Obando y Bravo. Former CIA agent Philip Agee predicted as far back as 1979 that the "political goal [of the CIA] would be to create an emotive 'cause.' . . . As the 'cause' is established, effort can be made to foment popular disillusion with the revolution."[8]

The "necessity" of national reconciliation was raised by the United States as far back as 1981, but this was principally for external consumption and it did not become a central plank in the war strategy until April 1985. In that month Reagan presented his notorious "peace plan": "Reconciliation is indispensable to peace. The Communists in Nicaragua have turned a cold shoulder to appeals for national reconciliation from the Pope and the Nicaraguan bishops. And we know that without

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incentives they won't change," he said.[9] As always, the "proposal" was presented as an ultimatum: if the Revolution does not surrender by accepting "peace" through dialogue, the war will escalate. The use of the term "dialogue" is an attempt to present the U.S. aggression as a "civil war" in which the armed contras are legitimate contenders. The Sandinistas are then offered the "olive branch" of dialogue as the only means to achieve peace. If this "offer" is refused, Sandinista intransigency is to blame for the continuing war.

There was widespread indignation at Reagan's proposal in the beginning, but, in a crude application of Langley's "big lie" tactic, it was subsequently repeated so often by the internal front that it came to be accepted among certain sectors of the population, who were manipulated into believing that real peace could be achieved through dialogue with the contras. The Catholic Church played a major role in this, leading the reconciliation campaign from its moral sanctuary and invoking the biblical justification of "universal brotherhood."

In this new stage of the war, reconciliation is the vehicle for building the counterrevolution's social base. Washington hopes to create a polarization of the population around the false issue of those wanting war and those wanting peace: it is attempting to channel an authentic yearning for peace into discontent with the Revolution as the "cause" of the war, and making the Catholic Church (along with the contras) into the standard bearer of peace, while the Sandinistas and their supporters become the warmongers. Reconciliation becomes the issue that the population can rally around—but by doing so they also rally around the counterrevolution. This, according to the strategy of LIW, will lead to the political defeat of the Revolution. And as COSEP vice-president Jaime Bengochea put it to us in a June 1985 interview in Managua, "We prefer a political defeat. The strategy for bringing about such a political defeat must be varied—from individual discontent, to group discontent, and finally national discontent. This is why we're calling for a national dialogue. There are a thousand things that could happen, a thousand factors that could come together to produce a political defeat."

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The new level of internal confrontation was clear from the moment Obando y Bravo stepped off the plane from Miami, (in June 1985) where he had spoken in front of a crowd of 4000 contra supporters. "Long live Reagan! Long live Obando!" chanted some one hundred provocateurs who attacked unarmed airport police as the plane touched down. A few days after his return the Cardinal began an ongoing tour of the countryside to push "reconciliation," while the president of the Bishop's Conference, Pablo Vega, convened meetings with CDN leaders to "organize the dialogue." Before long antigovernment political marches, disguised as "religious processions," were taking place throughout the country, called for by the Cardinal and organized by the CDN. In many cases CDN members passed out leaflets calling for reconciliation while supporters sprayed slogans—such as "I follow Obando, and I'm ready to die with Calero" and "With the Christian resurrection, we will defeat the revolution"—on public walls. The Cardinal led the march. At the same time, and taking advantage of the climate these rallies created, the internal reaction began a number of efforts at destabilization, including campaigns to encourage youth to desert from the country's defense forces and the publication of previously censored counterrevolutionary literature. In August and September the government broke up clandestine FDN cells that had been working with the support of various CDN members to carry out urban terrorist actions.

It is in this context that the National State of Emergency was declared in mid-October, reinstating certain restrictions on civil liberties (including the right to public assembly without prior government permission). These measures provide the Revolution with the "juridical instruments to defend the homeland from aggressions and conspiracies imported from abroad," as Vice-President Dr. Sergio Ramírez put it.

The Lessons of History

The FSLN is keenly aware that those who have not learned from history are doomed to repeat it. In 1934 the first Somoza, installed in Managua by U.S. marines, invited Sandino down from the northern mountains for "negotiations." Once in Mana-

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gua, Somoza disarmed the "General of Free Men," murdered him in cold blood, and then proceeded to massacre his supporters. The Sandinistas are determined that this will not happen again. Sandino's successors are now in Managua and they have armed the people.

In a speech in April, Tomás Borge, the Minister of Interior, rejected all imperialist ultimatums:

> Those who now demand negotiation would like to repeat history. We will enter into a dialogue with them when the gentlemen of COSEP count all the grains of sand in the ocean, and all the stars in the sky, and the day they finish counting, they'll have to go back and count two times more, and then we'll think it over many times before giving them an answer. To enter into a dialogue with them would mean that we give them a legitimacy they don't have, that we forget who they are and lose sight of their strategic objective: to destroy the Sandinista people's revolution and return Nicaragua to a neocolonial status. Accepting dialogue would be the beginning of a series of concessions that in the end would lead us to forsaking revolutionary power, the power of the people.[10]

The Sandinista Revolution has demonstrated its creative capacity to remain one step ahead of the U.S.-sponsored counterrevolution. The FSLN leadership understood, long before the North American proponents of LIW came to the same conclusion, that the essence of the struggle is political and not military. Faced with the growing sophistication of the U.S. war, the Nicaraguan people are themselves deepening their revolutionary process, and this is their ultimate defense.

The newly devised and implemented autonomy project for the ethnic minorities on the Atlantic Coast is breaking down the historic isolation of that region and patching up the initial errors committed by the Sandinistas, two of the factors that had allowed the contras to establish a limited social base in that region. The "Indian problem" runs deep throughout Latin America: only a dynamic revolution is capable of providing a historic solution, and every step that the Nicaraguan's have taken in this direction is a setback for the U.S. counterrevolution.

Similarly, a more profound phase of the agrarian reform, first introduced in 1982, was initiated in the northern war zones

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in 1985. The promise of the transformation of land tenure and rural production relations is rendering the military aggression of the armed contras and the ideological manipulation of the internal front increasingly less effective in these volatile zones.

The autonomy and agrarian reform projects are examples of how the deepening of the revolutionary process defends the Revolution. In addition, the ongoing national defense effort is a further attack on the counterrevolution: social mobilization generates increased levels of popular organization and consciousness that constantly renew the Revolution.

At the same time, a "war economy" is being created. Production and distribution are being reorganized both to meet the requirements of defense and to guarantee the most essential needs of the population even under prolonged wartime conditions. Internationally, the ranks of the anti-intervention front have not been significantly diminished despite Washington's success in driving the wedge ever deeper between Nicaragua and its Central American neighbors. The Reagan administration's inability to turn most of the bourgeois democracies in Latin America and Western Europe against Nicaragua, as well as the relative ease (despite initial dislocations) with which Nicaragua has weathered the economic embargo imposed in May 1985—thanks primarily to its broad and diversified trade relations—demonstrate that the world of the 1980s is too complex and multipolar for U.S. imperialism to achieve easily its objective of isolating Nicaragua internationally.

As the war intensifies, so will the challenge Nicaragua faces. But for how many years can imperialism go on waging a low-intensity war? Despite Washington's unlimited material resources, the war against Nicaragua will continue to generate domestic and international political contradictions for the United States—a chicken that will sooner or later come home to roost.

NOTES

1. According to press reports, President Reagan, on the basis of National Security Council recommendations, authorized an initial $19 million covert action program against Nicaragua on December 1, 1981. Nevertheless, organizing the contras had actually begun shortly after the President's inauguration. ARDE, Eden Pastora's organization, was

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fashioned later, with a different political image that served to attract the anti-Somoza bourgeoisie.

2. "Who Are the Contras? An Analysis of the Makeup of the Leadership of the Rebel Forces, and of the Nature of the Private American Groups Providing Them Financial and Material Support," a research report prepared by the members of the Arms Control and Foreign Policy Caucus of the U.S. Congress, Washington, D.C., 18 April 1985.
3. *Miami Herald,* 24 February 1985.
4. *Wall Street Journal,* 5 March 1985.
5. See Richard A. Hunt and Richard H. Schultz, Jr., eds., *Lessons from an Unconventional War: Reassessing U.S. Strategies for Future Conflict* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1981).
6. John W. Waghelstein, "Post-Vietnam Counterinsurgency Doctrine," *Military Review* (May 1985).
7. Edward N. Luttwak, "Notes on Low Intensity Warfare," *Parameters* (December 1983). Luttwak serves as a special advisor to the Pentagon.
8. Philip Agee, "The CIA's Blueprint for Nicaragua," *Covert Action Information Bulletin* (October 1979).
9. Presidential news conference in Washington, D.C., 4 April 1985.
10. Speech in Managua, 27 April 1985.

From the Horse's Mouth

Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, said Washington was now much more willing to help those resisting Soviet intervention in the third world than it was immediately after the Vietnam War. . . .

In the United States, he said, "there are going to be a lot of people who are fairly fainthearted" about responding to such developments. "As they see, in some of these cases, the amount of violence increase—and it will, because the purpose of our aid is to permit people who are fighting on our side to use more violence—a lot of people are going to get scared off," Mr. Abrams said.

New York Times, 25 November 1985

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BIG MAC AND THE TROPICAL FORESTS

by JOSEPH K. SKINNER

Hello, fast-food chains.

Goodbye, tropical forests.

Sound like an odd connection? The "free-market" economy has led to results even stranger than this, but perhaps none have been as environmentally devastating.

These are the harsh facts: the tropical forests are being leveled for commercial purposes at the rate of 150,000 square kilometers a year, an area the size of England and Wales combined.[1]

At this rate, the world's tropical forests could be entirely destroyed within seventy-three years. Already as much as a fifth or a quarter of the huge Amazon forest, which constitutes a third of the world's total rain forest, has been cut, and the rate of destruction is accelerating. And nearly two thirds of the Central American forests have been cleared or severely degraded since 1950.

Tropical forests, which cover only 7 percent of the Earth's land surface (it used to be 12 percent), support half the species of the world's living things. Due to their destruction, "We are surely losing one or more species a day right now out of the five million (minimum figure) on Earth," says Norman Myers, author of numerous books and articles on the subject and consul-

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Joseph Skinner is a 1979 graduate of the University of California, Davis, Plant Sciences Department. He reports that "in all of my course work at UCD, only once was brief mention made of the biological calamity described in this article, and even then no connection was made between it and U.S. economic interests."

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tant to the World Bank and the World Wildlife Fund. "By the time ecological equilibrium is restored, at least one-quarter of all species will have disappeared, probably a third, and conceivably even more. . . . If this pattern continues, it could mean the demise of two million species by the middle of next century." Myers calls the destruction of the tropical forests "one of the greatest biological debacles to occur on the face of the Earth." Looking at the effects it will have on the course of biological evolution, Myers says:

> The impending upheaval in evolution's course could rank as one of the greatest biological revolutions of paleontological time. It will equal in scale and significance the development of aerobic respiration, the emergence of flowering plants, and the arrival of limbed animals. But of course the prospective degradation of many evolutionary capacities will be an impoverishing, not a creative, phenomenon.[2]

In other words, such rapid destruction will vacate so many niches so suddenly that a "pest and weed" ecology, consisting of a relatively few opportunistic species (rats, roaches, and the like) will be created.

Beyond this—as if it weren't enough—such destruction could well have cataclysmic effects on the Earth's weather patterns, causing, for example, an irreversible desertification of the North American grain belt. Although the scope of the so-called greenhouse effect—in which rising levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere heat the planet by preventing infrared radiation from escaping into space—is still being debated within the scientific community, it is not at all extreme to suppose that the fires set to clear tropical forests will contribute greatly to this increase in atmospheric CO_2 and thereby to untold and possibly devastating changes in the world's weather systems.

Big Mac Attack

So what does beef, that staple of the fast-food chains and of the North American diet in general, have to do with it?

It used to be, back in 1960, that the United States imported practically no beef. That was a time when North Americans were consuming a "mere" 85 pounds of beef per person

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per year. By 1980 this was up to 134 pounds per person per year. Concomitant with this increase in consumption, the United States began to import beef, so that by 1981 some 800,000 tons were coming in from abroad, 17 percent of it from tropical Latin America and three fourths of that from Central America. Since fast-food chains have been steadily expanding and now are a $5-billion-a-year business, accounting for 25 percent of all the beef consumed in the United States, the connections between the fast-food empire and tropical beef are clear.

Cattle ranching is "by far the major factor in forest destruction in tropical Latin America," says Myers. "Large fast-food outlets in the U.S. and Europe foster the clearance of forests to produce cheap beef."[3]

And cheap it is, compared to North American beef: by 1978 the average price of beef imported from Central America was $1.47/kg, while similar North American beef cost $3.30/kg.

Cheap, that is, for North Americans, but not for Central Americans. Central Americans cannot afford their own beef. Whereas beef production in Costa Rica increased twofold between 1959 and 1972, per capita consumption of beef in that country went down from 30 lbs. a year to 19. In Honduras, beef production increased by 300 percent between 1965 and 1975, but consumption decreased from 12 lbs. per capita per year to 10. So, although two thirds of Central America's arable land is in cattle, local consumption of beef is decreasing; the average domestic cat in the United States now consumes more beef than the average Central American.[4]

Brazilian government figures show that 38 percent of all deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon between 1966 and 1975 was attributable to large-scale cattle ranching. Although the presence of hoof-and-mouth disease among Brazilian cattle has forced U.S. lawmakers to prohibit the importation of chilled or frozen Brazilian beef, the United States imports $46 million per year of cooked Brazilian beef, which goes into canned products; over 80 percent of Brazilian beef is still exported, most of it to Western Europe, where no such prohibition exists.

At present rates, all remaining Central American forests will have been eliminated by 1990. The cattle ranching largely

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responsible for this is in itself highly inefficient: as erosion and nutrient leaching eat away the soil, production drops from an average one head per hectare—measly in any case—to a pitiful one head per five to seven hectares within five to ten years. A typical tropical cattle ranch employs only one person per 2,000 head, and meat production barely reaches 50 lbs./acre/year. In Northern Europe, in farms that do not use imported feed, it is over 500 lbs./acre/year.

This real-term inefficiency does not translate into bad business, however, for although there are some absentee landowners who engage in ranching for the prestige of it and are not particularly interested in turning large profits, others find bank loans for growing beef for export readily forthcoming, and get much help and encouragement from such organizations as the Pan American Health Organization, the Organization of American States, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and U.S. AID, without whose technical assistance "cattle production in the American tropics would be unprofitable, if not impossible."[5] The ultimate big winner appears to be the United States, where increased imports of Central American beef are said to have done more to stem inflation than any other single government initiative.

"On the good land, which could support a large population, you have the rich cattle owners, and on the steep slopes, which should be left in forest, you have the poor farmers," says Gerardo Budowski, director of the Tropical Agricultural Research and Training Center in Turrialba, Costa Rica. "It is still good business to clear virgin forest in order to fatten cattle for, say, five to eight years and then abandon it."[6]

(Ironically, on a trip I made in 1981 to Morazán, a Salvadoran province largely under control of FMLN guerrillas, I inquired into the guerrilla diet and discovered that beef, expropriated from the cattle ranches, was a popular staple.)

Swift-Armour's Swift Armor

The rain forest ecosystem, the oldest on Earth, is extremely complex and delicate. In spite of all the greenery one sees there, it is a myth that rain forest soil is rich. It is actually quite poor,

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leached of all nutrients save the most insoluble (such as iron oxides, which give lateritic soil—the most common soil type found there—its red color). Rather, the ecosystem of the rain forest is a "closed" one, in which the nutrients are to be found in the biomass, that is, in the living canopy of plants and in the thin layer of humus on the ground that is formed from the matter shed by the canopy. Hence the shallow-rootedness of most tropical forest plant species. Since the soil itself cannot replenish nutrients, nutrient recycling is what keeps the system going.

Now, what happens when the big cattle ranchers, under the auspices of the Swift-Armour Meat Packing Co., or United Brands, or the King Ranch sling a huge chain between two enormous tractors, level a few tens of thousands of acres of tropical forest, burn the debris, fly a plane over to seed the ash with guinea grass, and then run their cattle on the newly created grasslands?[7]

For the first three years or so the grass grows like crazy, up to an inch a day, thriving on all that former biomass. After that, things go quickly downhill: the ash becomes eroded and leached, the soil becomes exposed and hardens to the consistency of brick, and the area becomes useless to agriculture. Nor does it ever regain anything near its former state. The Amazon is rising perceptively as a result of the increased runoff due to deforestation.

Tractor-and-chain is only one way of clearing the land. Another common technique involves the use of herbicides such as Tordon, 2,4-D, and 2,4,5-T (Agent Orange). The dioxin found in Agent Orange can be extremely toxic to animal life and is very persistent in the environment.

Tordon, since it leaves a residue deadly to all broad-leaved plants, renders the deforested area poisonous to all plants except grasses; consequently, even if they wanted to, ranchers could not plant soil-enriching legumes in the treated areas, a step which many agronomists recommend for keeping the land productive for at least a little longer.

The scale of such operations is a far cry from the traditional slash-and-burn practiced by native jungle groups, which is done on a scale small enough so that the forest can success-

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fully reclaim the farmed areas. Such groups, incidentally, are also being decimated by cattle interests in Brazil and Paraguay—as missionaries, human rights groups, and cattlemen themselves will attest.

Capital's "manifest destiny" has traditionally shown little concern for the lives of trees or birds or Indians, or anything else which interferes with immediate profitability, but the current carving of holes in the gene pool by big agribusiness seems particularly short-sighted. Since the tropical forests contain two thirds of the world's genetic resources, their destruction will leave an enormous void in the pool of genes necessary for the creation of new agricultural hybrids. This is not to mention the many plants as yet undiscovered—there could be up to 15,000 unknown species in South America alone—which may in themselves contain remarkable properties. (In writing about alkaloids found in the Madagascar periwinkle which have recently revolutionized the treatment of leukemia and Hodgkin's disease, British biochemist John Humphreys said: "If this plant had not been analyzed, not even a chemist's wildest ravings would have hinted that such structures would be pharmacologically active."[8] Ninety percent of Madagascar's forests have been cut.)

But there is no small truth in Indonesian Minister for Environment and Development Emil Salim's complaint that the "South is asked to conserve genes while the other fellow, in the North, is consuming things that force us to destroy the genes in the South."[9]

Where's the Beef?

The marketing of beef imported into the United States is extremely complex, and the beef itself ends up in everything from hot dogs to canned soup. Fresh meat is exported in refrigerated container ships to points of entry, where it is inspected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Once inspected, it is no longer required to be labeled "imported."[10] From there it goes into the hands of customhouse brokers and meat packers, often changing hands many times; and from there it goes to the fast-food chains or the food processors. The financial structures behind this empire are even more complex, involving govern-

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ments and quasipublic agencies, such as the Export-Import Bank and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, as well as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, all of which encourage cattle raising in the forest lands. (Brazilian government incentives to cattle ranching in Amazonia include a 50 percent income-tax rebate on ranchers' investments elsewhere in Brazil, tax holidays of up to ten years, loans with negative interest rates in real terms, and exemptions from sales taxes and import duties. Although these incentives were deemed excessive and since 1979 no longer apply to new ranches, they still continue for existing ones. This cost the Brazilian government $63,000 for each ranching job created.)

Beef production in the tropics may be profitable for the few, but it is taking place at enormous cost for the majority and for the planet as a whole. Apart from the environmental destruction, it is a poor converter of energy to protein and provides few benefits for the vast majority of tropical peoples in terms of employment or food. What they require are labor-intensive, multiple-cropping systems.

The world is obviously hostage to an ethic which puts short-term profitability above all else, and such catastrophes as the wholesale destruction of the tropical forests and the continued impoverishment of their peoples are bound to occur as long as this ethic rules.

NOTES

1. Jean-Paul Landley, "Tropical Forest Resources," *FAO Forestry Paper* 30 (Rome: FAO, 1982). This UN statistic is the most accurate to date. For further extrapolations from it, see Nicholas Guppy, "Tropical Deforestation: A Global View," *Foreign Affairs* 62, no. 4 (Spring 1984).
2. There are amazingly few scientists in the world with broad enough expertise to accurately assess the widest implications of tropical deforestation; Norman Myers is one of them. His books include *The Sinking Ark* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1979). See also *Conversion of Moist Tropical Forests* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, 1980), "The End of the Line," *Natural History* 94, no. 2 (February 1985), and "The Hamburger Connection," *Ambio* 10, no. 1 (1981). I have used Myers extensively in the preparation of this article. The quotes in this paragraph are from "The Hamburger Connection," pp. 3, 4, 5.
3. Myers, "End of the Line," p. 2.

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4. See James Nations and Daniel I. Komer, "Rainforests and the Hamburger Society," *Environment* 25, no. 3 (April 1983).
5. Ibid., p. 17.
6. Catherine Caufield, "The Rain Forests," *New Yorker* (January 14, 1985), p. 42. This excellent article was later incorporated in a book, *In the Rainforest* (New York: Knopf, 1985).
7. Other multinationals with interests in meat packing and cattle ranching in tropical Latin America include Armour-Dial International, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., and Gulf and Western Industries, Inc. See Roger Burbach and Patricia Flynn, *Agribusiness in the Americas* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1980).
8. Quoted in Caufield, "Rain Forests," p. 60.
9. Ibid., p. 100.
10. This is one way McDonald's, for example, can claim not to use foreign beef. For a full treatment of McDonald's, see M. Boas and S. Chain, *Big Mac: The Unauthorized Story of McDonald's* (New York: New American Library, 1976).

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RIDING THE WAVES WITH THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

by DAN SUBOTNIK

Cut taxes, cut spending, cut regulation. In accordance with conventional media wisdom, the *Wall Street Journal* keeps its message nice and simple. And we readers have responded with our hearts as well as our heads. We cheer each time the *Journal* proposes slashing tax rates, and we recoil when it finds a government program that has not worked. We exult with the *Journal* over every grain of rice in China converted to private ownership, and we mourn with it every time an American acorn is claimed by the state. We've even learned to scorn with it anyone who thinks of the yawning budget deficit as a matter of real concern.

In effect, the *Journal's* world view has become executive sitcom material. In every editorial, and in news items as well, we know who the good guys and the fall guys are; we know the ending from the start. Day after day, like television junkies, we are carried away by the *Journal's* artful development of its stories.

Those of us, however, who are schooled to distrust simple solutions (including Adam Smith's magical Invisible Hand) and the manipulation of emotion by the media find that this very seductiveness leaves us with more and more questions. Are there *no* good taxes? Are there *no* good spending programs? Are there *no* good regulations? Are there not even ten righteous bureaucrats to redeem the U.S. government? Are the hundreds of thousands of our neighbors who work for government really

Dan Subotnik is associate professor, Touro College School of Law, and lecturer, University of Chicago Graduate School of Business.

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traitors who are laying waste to the national economy and, in the process, wasting their own lives?

The questions continue. Has the "dismal science" at long last yielded up its dark secret and presented it to the *Journal*? Should we demolish many of our political institutions and upset the lives of millions for the *Journal's* vision of the future? In short, is the *Journal* truly inspired? Or is it afflicted with truly inspired arrogance?

This is the age of the *Journal*. Perhaps never before has it been more influential with those responsible for national policy. Thus, *Journal* editorial opinion must be carefully evaluated.

To what extent should we defer to *Journal* opinion? Clearly, this question cannot be answered by reference to current economic analyses or prescriptions for the future; expert opinion is still too divided on these subjects, and good data are too scarce. Nevertheless, we can profitably look at the *Journal's* claim to authority in philosophical terms and its performance on both general and specific issues of the past.

What, for a start, does the *Journal* itself see as the basis of its authority? Far from merely selling a newspaper, much less mongering a bias, the creators (and fans) of the *Journal* seem to see its viewpoint as the fruit of a centuries-long cultivation of rationality in the Western world. The *Journal* sees the same forces that produced democratic government, modern science, and technological progress as having also produced its enlightened conception of economics, a conception at once parallel to and supported by these other Western glories—a conception with its own part to play in the ultimate triumph of the Western mind over the inequities, infirmities, and other inconveniences of nature and the human condition.

Philosophically, in brief, the *Journal* sees its own economics as a hard science, the principles and conclusions of which offer indisputable truth. It holds this truth to be self-evident, and it speaks in the rudest of tones, with the righteous conviction of one exclusively privy to the truth.

This seems to be the *Journal's* self-image. But must we, the readers, buy this vision? How persuasive is the *Journal* on a

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general area of history where it speaks most loudly, the pre-Reagan American economy?

The *Journal* takes the general position that from the New Deal until Reagan's presidency the American economy was moribund. But is this accurate? Were the fifty years before Reagan really a disaster economically and socially in relation either to the rest of the world or to our own previous 150 years? Are the feelings of well-being we have experienced over the last fifty-odd years largely an illusion? Are drastic changes required now because we are truly at a point of national desperation where we have nothing left to lose?

To these questions the *Journal* responds "yes." Nevertheless, and this is puzzling, it seems to believe that history is working against it. There is no plausible explanation for its institutional scorched earth policy other than the fear that if anything is left standing of the old order after Ronald Reagan, a new administration in 1989 will immediately rebuild the malignant welfare state on the foundations of the old.

Suppose we are at a critical turning point, as the *Journal* tells us. Again, should we embark on the *Journal's* course? Have its economic and scientific values guided us well through specific crises of the past? Or, have they too often left us at sea?

Let us transport ourselves back seventy-three years to a day in mid-April. Americans are desperately awaiting word about whether their loved ones have survived a nighttime disaster in the upper reaches of the Atlantic. Hoping for reassurance, they read in the *Journal*:

NATURE AND HUMAN THOUGHT

Slowly but surely human thought is neutralizing the largely incalculable forces of Nature. This is not the first lesson that will be drawn from the disaster of the Titanic. But such a lesson is certainly implicit in the facts as they are known. The largest steamship afloat, traveling at a speed unheard of a half decade ago, displacement so terrific as to tear another vessel not much smaller from its moorings, seems to have hit an iceberg of enormous bulk, head on, and survived the disaster. . . .

Great vessels have gone to sea and never been heard of again. Their injury was necessarily largely below the water line and sinking was only a matter of minutes. The gravity of the damage to

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the Titanic is apparent; but the important point is that she did not sink. Her water-tight bulkheads were really water tight. . . .

Man is slowly but steadily bringing order and usefulness to the devastating forces of Nature. . . . His inventions destroy him in the beginning but save him in the end. . . . Every experience makes for greater safety, greater comfort, greater rewards.

Man is the weakest and most formidable creature on earth. His physical means of protection and offense are trifling. But his brain has within it the spirit of the divine and he overcomes natural obstacles by thought, which is incomparably the greatest force in the universe. (16 April 1912)

Here is a valiant defense of the Western scientific ethos. Here is the article of faith that people, through the perfectability of their mental processes, can control their destiny. We can laugh a little now, but it is important to understand the nature of this gaffe.

The sinking of the Titanic was not just another event in American history, but a powerfully symbolic event that forced a reassessment of Western scientific and economic values. And the *Journal's* error was not just a piece of bad luck attributable to ignorance of the whole story; rather, the error stems from the very character of *Journal* ideology. I say this, first, because the editorial itself indicates clear knowledge that not all the facts were in. Yet, in spite of the uncertainty, the *Journal's* self-assurance was so great that the expression of its world view could not be contained.

Moreover, the tenacity of the *Journal's* ideology is well illustrated by its subsequent insistence on a second, closely related article of faith. In the days that followed the piece just mentioned, when it became clear that science *had* failed and fifteen hundred souls had perished, numerous suggestions were made, and reported in the *Journal,* for restricting conduct on the high seas. One such suggestion was the simple one that lifeboats be required for all passengers of ocean liners.

How did the *Journal* react to these suggestions? How did it end the Titanic episode? "[T]he loss of the Titanic, with its fearful deathroll, was the dominating feature of the week. It furnished some awful lessons and will probably provoke a good deal of gratuitous legislation and superfluous regulation."

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Talk about being left up a creek without a paddle! It would have been nice to know what the "awful lessons" were, but the *Journal* didn't say. What we do know is the *Journal's* viewpoint, that the forward march of science to the drumbeat of the private sector is the key to progress for the human race.

The *Journal* did not limit expression of this ideology to the early part of the century; under its masthead similar calls to governmental inaction have been issued since that time on concerns as diverse as nuclear energy, genetic engineering, and "star wars" military research. A close look at the cigarette issue is particularly useful in the evaluation of *Journal* editorial policy.

When the surgeon general's massive report came out in January 1964 suggesting that smoking was associated with a 70 percent increase in death rates among smokers, the *Journal* responded: "If there is to be more regulation, we would prefer it to be voluntary." When the Federal Trade Commission suggested printed warnings on packages, the *Journal* protested: "Here plainly is an issue that transcends that of smoking. The passion for control is a built-in vice of government regulators, and this is notably true of the FTC, with its innumerable pesky regulations and proceedings. . . . If people in general aren't aware . . . [of the dangers] by now, they must indeed be semi-morons."

When the Public Health Service sought $1.9 million for an anti-smoking campaign in the schools, the *Journal* reminded its readers that "obesity is unhealthy; there are a lot of overweight school children; shouldn't there be a federal educational program aimed at fatties?"

When the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare proposed requiring cigarette manufacturers simply to list tar and nicotine content, the *Journal* ridiculed the effort. And when the FCC applied its "fairness doctrine" to broadcasters of cigarette ads, the *Journal* warned of the demise of the whole television industry. "The public has come to tolerate cigarette commercials; if it is faced with anti-cigarette commercials as well, the mass tuning out might make the whole issue academic."

Unlike the Titanic, the television industry survived. So did

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the views of the Editorial Board, as is evident from its recent opinion on the calamity in Bhopal. Quoting a physician, the *Journal* wrote:

> Of those people killed, half might not have been alive today if it weren't for the plant and the modern health standards made possible by wide use of pesticides! We don't need cost-benefit analyses to know the truth of that. . . .
>
> The tragedy, having occurred, cannot be undone. Operators of chemical plants can probably learn important lessons from it and apply better safeguards in the future. More important, from India's point of view, will be whether it heeds the propaganda from its big and meddlesome neighbor or goes ahead with the process of making itself a modern industrial nation.

There you go again, *Wall Street Journal*. You remain transfixed by the legerdemain of the Invisible Hand. You leave no room for democratic institutions to exert any control over scientific or economic processes in favor of human health and welfare. Ignoring all the perils, you steadfastly stay the course.

There is another way to read the "awful lessons" of these and future tragedies. Perhaps it is that our modern powers of scientific observation and analysis have limits of magnitude and value, and perhaps it is the denial of these limits in favor of a single formula that is conceptually flabby and dangerous. Perhaps any worship of an all-powerful and invisible hand is the real Voodoo Economics. And beyond that, perhaps all absolute creeds like the *Journal's* are flawed at the very core.

If these criticisms sound right, there may well be another important economic lesson to be learned here, one independent of technological issues. If we believe that our government has become unnecessarily and harmfully large, no doubt we should pare it down. Perhaps, though, we should dismantle the structure built up slowly over 50 years with caution, with a sense of experimentation and intellectual modesty, and with faith that the people will be able to evaluate intelligently each change as it comes.

A sense of caution is appropriate for reasons of basic fairness as well as theoretical soundness. Many Americans have relied in good faith on long-standing government spending pro-

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grams (both direct and indirect) to do precisely what the *Journal* applauds—to build farms, factories and other commercial enterprises. To be sure, they have extended their hands into the public till. But though they have created enterprises that are not ideologically watertight, they are not exactly hardened criminals. They should be able to expect that their accumulated wealth won't simply be washed away in the interest of doctrinal purity.

Trumpeting the prophecy of a glorious spring, the *Wall Street Journal* urges us to throw the baggage of winter overboard. However, April can be a cruel month. For it was in April—under a cloudless sky which seemed to offer limitless visibility—that the world experienced the tragedy of that night to remember. We should think carefully before we stop the ship of state abruptly and proceed full steam backwards.

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FOR A BETTER LOVE

by ROQUE DALTON

Everybody agrees that sex
is a category in the world of lovers:
thus its tenderness and savage branches.

Everybody agrees that sex
is an economic category:
you have only to mention prostitution,
fashion,
the newspaper sections that are only for her
or only for him.

The trouble begins
when a woman says
that sex is a political category.

Because when a woman says
that sex is a political category
she can begin to stop being a woman as such
and become a woman for herself,
to make the woman into a woman
on the basis of her humanity
and not of her sex,
to know that the magical lemon-flavoured deodorant
and the soap that voluptuously caresses her skin
are made by the same firm that makes napalm,
to know that the basic household tasks
are the basic tasks of the social class of the household,
that the difference of sexes
shines much better in the profound amorous night
when all those secrets are known
that had us wearing masks and estranged.

This poem is taken from *Mirrors of War*, a collection of revolutionary Salvadorean prose and poetry, that has just been published by Monthly Review Press.

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PRAXEDIS GUERRERO: EARLY REVOLUTIONARY

Revolution Is Beautiful

by REY DEVIS

No more beautiful definition of revolution was ever penned than that of Práxedis Guerrero, whose youthful death, seventy-five years ago this month, in the dawn of the Mexican Revolution, was a major loss to Mexico and the world.

He lived revolution and he died it in his brief span of years; and, given the chance to relive his life, he'd probably have opted for the same. To him revolution was a thing of beauty and a joy forever. It is the price one pays—and gladly—to attain that highest of all ideals, human freedom. If one chances to lose one's own little personal life in the noble struggle of cleansing renewal, it is not too tall a price to pay.

He went joyfully to the fight, telling his closest friends and the woman in his life that he had a strong feeling that he'd not be back. He was right—dying in late 1910 at age 28, leading a spearhead of daredevils aimed at Dictator Díaz's decadent heart, dying by the hand of one of his own men who had joined the Revolution not for what he could give it but for what he could get out of it—the kind of person who won that revolution, one regretfully reflects. Yet so lofty was Guerrero's ideal of freedom, and so firm was his faith that it is humanly possible to attain it, that he could not have shirked his duties to the race and the future.

Guerrero, born into a patrician family, wondered early why he had so much while workers' children had so little. He spurned his hacienda inheritance, and spent his scant allotment of years struggling to uplift the lean and hungry lives of the humble and the hapless. National hero Ricardo Flores Magón,

Rey Devis is a writer presently living in Mexico.

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publisher of the Spanish-language, California-based weekly for which "Prax" worked, lovingly called him his aristocratic peon.

Práxedis was a complex, many-faceted gem—a charismatic man of action, deep thinker, visionary, wrangler, sawyer, mechanic, railwayman, organizer of miners, as open as children (who instinctively loved him) but with an otherworldly mystical side, classically educated but able to pass as a humble trader when on dangerous spy missions in Dictator Díaz's Mexico, a writer of blood-'n-guts agitprop or scintillating prose poems like "Escuchad!" (Listen), which originally appeared in Ricardo Flores Magón's *Regeneración*.

This moving paean to freedom was written a few months before his heavy date with destiny. Tough revolutionist Fernando Palomarez shamelessly admitted that he wept when he read this beautiful prose-poem:

> Do you hear it? It is the wind that stirs the leaves of the forest primeval, the breath of the future that wakes the still and slumberous bushes. It is the first sigh of the virgin forest as it receives an impulsive kiss on its demure brow from Aeolus.
>
> Do you hear it? It is the wind that claws an invisible mantle in the twistings and turnings of the sleeping mountain, the thrust of the idea that activates the limbs of the masses, a wilderness of souls. It is the awakening gust that sets the oaks to trembling, the opening blast of the hurricane that sweeps from hill and dale the confounding fog of sterile resignation.
>
> The warm and fruitful breeze permeates the forest; each leaf it touches becomes a new voice; each branch that moves is an arm that takes up a weapon—a voice that joins the heroic chorus hailing the morrow of liberation, an arm that stretches forth to seek out the tyrant's heart.
>
> It is the breath of Revolution!
>
> Do you feel it? It is the vibration of divine hammers pounding in the depths of the earth. It is Life bursting forth from the dark vortex to shiver Death's lair where grim ghouls rule.
>
> It is the thrust of the Revolution.

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Forerunner of Feminism

by BOBBYE ORTIZ

Práxedis Guerrero was unquestionably a courageous and selfless revolutionary, a person of vision and action in balance. It will not diminish his stature to state that he should not be perceived as a voice in the wilderness. It should indeed add to his stature to note that in his view the scope of struggles for the liberation of humankind had of necessity to include struggles against the oppression of women in all the spheres of their existence.

He lived his truncated life (and indeed died) as a committed participant and leader in an organized struggle led by a semiclandestine political party, the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) of which Ricardo Flores Magón was the most prominent and influential figure.

Despite the misnomer "Liberal" in its title, the PLM began early in its existence to draw on the anarchist tradition and called for a total revolutionary transformation of society, led by campesinos, peons, and workers, in which the land and the means of production would be expropriated. Its theoretical assumptions and its goals were drastically at odds with the parliamentary, narrowly anti-reelectionist focus of those forces which—in the name of the "Mexican Revolution"[1]—were to depose one man, Porfirio Díaz, from the presidency and replace him with another, Francisco Madero, leaving virtually intact for the indefinite future the socioeconomic relations between the powerful and the dispossessed.[2]

Like many Latin American left political and trade union leaders of their epoch, Guerrero and Magón looked to the European anarchists—Bakunin, Kropotkin, Francisco Ferrer, Elisée Reclus—as revered luminaries, with whom they shared a broad global vision, multidimensional in its scrutiny of the many false ideologies which reinforce oppressive social relationships.[3]

Bobbye Ortiz was formerly associate editor of *Monthly Review* and is a founding member of Women's International Resource Exchange (WIRE).

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This enriching cross-fertilization must have contributed to Guerrero's and Magón's ability to see the need for profound changes in the new world they aspired to create, not only in political and economic structures but also in the domestic sphere.

Their consciousness of the interpersonal dimension of authentic revolutionary change must also have been reinforced by their experiential knowledge—they were, after all, activists first and foremost—as well as their knowledge of Mexican social history.

Their concern with women as the victims of a patriarchal class system would presumably have been deepened by the dramatically increased visibility of women in the arena of labor and antiregime struggles, beginning in the 1880s. Cigarette factories and textile mills were the scenes of bloody strikes, in which women were notably vocal and militant. Although the strikes did not result in victories, it has been claimed that "they spurred the combativity of women [and] . . . they went on to join political movements. Many of them joined . . . the PLM . . . [whose] program led to the creation of organizations of women workers."[4]

It can be assumed that Guerrero and his colleagues incorporated the experiences and outlooks of these women in struggle into their interpretations of the socioeconomic context of women's existence. Their analyses took the form of articles in the PLM newspaper (which, when suppressed under one title, reappeared under another: *Regeneración, Punto Rojo, Revolución*). Guerrero was the founding editor of *Punto Rojo*[5] and subsequently joined the editorial board of *Regeneración,* a post he held until his death. Although there are no complete files of these journals, about twenty articles signed by Guerrero have survived; the subject of two of them is the historic oppression and the revolutionary potential of women.[6] Flores Magón also confronted these issues in at least one article.[7]

In "La Mujer," an abridged version of a talk given to the Regeneración Group in the Los Angeles Labor Temple scarcely a month before his death, Guerrero lashed out against the age-old existence of women's oppression throughout patriarchal society, and concluded that forms of subjugation have changed but in essence it still prevails. He condemned both the Catholic

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church and "established custom" for "taming women" and narrowing their options. His plea for the expansion of the definition of people's liberation to include the so-called private sphere prefigures similar efforts of socialist-feminist movements of today to place this expanded definition on the revolutionary agenda.

It should not go unremarked that virtually no historians have acknowledged or analyzed these articles.[8] Despite the authors' archaism of style and their tentative grasp of anthropology and world history, Guerrero and Magón reveal a profound awareness of the need to examine and eliminate the personal and institutional underpinnings of sexism, if human liberation is to have meaning. This awareness is scarcely matched by that of most (male) left-movement leaders today, who apparently will have to rediscover the Mediterranean, someday.

The following is an abridged version of "La Mujer":

> The Bible consecrated the impurity of women. . . . The women of India . . . suffered the tyranny of hideous customs . . .; widows were burned alive on the death of their husbands. . . . China was another of the most dismal countries for women; paternal authority was and is despotic, as is the husband's authority. . . . Greek men, with all their powerful intelligence, were not more humane toward women; Aeschylus, poet and philosopher, defender of patriarchal institutions, developed the strange notion that a woman is not the mother of her child but a temporary depository of her husband's child.
>
> Let us now observe the . . . situation that prevails in modern nations. . . . In general, women are still not granted their rightful place, and the boychild who receives his initial impulse of psychic life from [his mother] will, on becoming a man, perpetuate discord between the two parts that form humanity. No longer are widows burned with the cadavers of their husbands; . . . armed raids are no longer carried out to provide the men of a given tribe with women. . . . Written laws and simple social convention act as women's executioners; *patria potestas*[9] manifests itself in a thousand oppressive ways. . . .
>
> The biblical theory of women's impurity has lost its infallibility; it has been replaced by the modern [claim] of the "inferiority of women." Inferiority of women! If we were sincere we would say: slavery of women!
>
> Countless generations [of women] have been subjected to the rigors of a deliberately planned education. When the results of that education manifest themselves; when the accumulated prejudices

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in the female brain, as well as the material obligations which men thrust on their shoulders, impede the free flight of intellect in the open space of ideas; when everything around them is oppressive and deceptive, [men] then come to the conclusion that women are inferior, in order not to admit or confess to the inequality of circumstances and the absence of opportunities. . . .

Religion, whatever the denomination, is the most terrible enemy of women. Under the pretext of consolation, it annihilates her conscience; in the name of a sterile love, it snatches love—the source of life and human happiness—away from her. . . . Religion is the ally of household and national despots; its mission is to tame: caresses or blows, cages or chains, everything it utilizes leads to the same end—to tame, to enslave women. . . .

Women have another no less terrible enemy: established custom. . . . A woman cannot live in free union with a man because custom opposes it, because a violation of custom brings in its wake contempt, scorn, insult, and execration. Custom has sanctified her slavery, her eternal status as a minor. . . . The just customs of yesterday are the crimes or the puerile stupidities of today. Why, then, such respect and reverence for the customs that impede the emancipation of women? Freedom frightens those who do not understand it and those who build their lives on the degradation and misery of others. That is why a hundred men oppose the emancipation of women for each one who defends or works for it. . . .

Women and men must struggle for . . . rational equality, [for the] harmonizing of individual and collective happiness, because without it the home will always nurture the seeds of tyranny, slavery, and social misery. . . .

NOTES

1. Ramón Eduardo Ruiz has quite aptly amended the title of that occurrence to "The Great Rebellion," inasmuch as it was "essentially a face-lifting of Mexican capitalism." Ruiz, *The Great Rebellion: Mexico 1905-1924* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1980), p. 7.
2. The PLM's contempt for Madero and his reelectionist party was frequently expressed in the columns of *Regeneración,* the PLM organ. For example: "Madero is a millionaire whose fabulous fortune has increased by the sweat and tears of the *peones* of his haciendas. [The anti-reelectionist party] struggles for 'effective' suffrage, and at the same time establishes a bourgeois republic like that of the United States." *Regeneración: 1900-1918,* Armando Bartra, ed. (Mexico: Ediciones Era, 1977), p. 287.
3. The fulminations of Reclus against marriage as an institution appear to have had their echos in both Guerrero's and Magón's writings. And their contact with Emma Goldman, during their various long periods of exile in the United States, must have sparked their interest in the social implications both of marriage and consensual unions.

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4. María Antonieta Rascón, "La mujer y la lucha social," in *Imagen y realidad de la mujer*, Elena Urrutia, ed. (Mexico: SepSetenta Diana, 1979), pp. 152-53. Not surprisingly, historians have not served well the cause of these women or their organizations. Rascón writes: "The example and theoretical contributions of women such as Juana Gutiérrez de Mendoza, Dolores Jiménez y Muro, Elisa Acuña Rossetti . . . and others have been ignored or reduced to anecdote. In addition to being militants of the PLM, they were founders of newspapers, . . . [and] they created program that promoted changes in the situation of women. . . . Their work in [the organizations] *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc, Amigas del Pueblo,* etc. is the most important antecedent to be salvaged by the contemporary [Mexican] women's liberation movement" (pp. 140-41).
5. A somewhat terse but perspicacious observation by Guerrero appeared in *Punto Rojo:* "Many 'men' say they love a woman when their overwhelming sentiment is that of possession." Práxedis Guerrero, *Artículos literarios y de combate* (Mexico: Edición del Grupo Cultural Ricardo Flores Magón, 1924), p. 106.
6. "Las revolucionarias" and "La mujer," in *Regeneración: 1900-1918,* pp. 198-99 and pp. 199-203 respectively.
7. "A la mujer," in *Regeneración: 1900-1918,* pp. 235-37. The following passage gives some idea of its thrust: "The condition of women in this century varies according to social category: but in spite of a certain sugar-coating of custom, in spite of the progress of philosophy, women are still subordinated to men by tradition and by law. Eternal minors, the law places them under the tutelage of their husbands. . . . Women, though they work more than men, earn less, and . . . ill-treatment and contempt are today, like yesterday, the bitter fruit they reap for a life of sacrifice" (p. 236).
8. Their apparent indifference to the significance of the articles in question has its analog in their equal lack of attention to certain demands laid down in the PLM's historic "Manifesto" of 1906, often described as the forerunner of the Constitution of 1917. Although many of its demands have been described and analyzed at length, there are two that appear not to have merited attention. The demand for legislative protection for domestic workers and for the cottage-industry workforce—largely women in both cases—goes unremarked, and the demand for equal rights for children of consensual unions and single mothers is not analyzed in terms of its implications for women.
9. *Patria potestas* is, in effect, the legal expression of the father's supreme authority within the family. It leans for justification on the notion of *fragilitas sexus,* that is, the alleged lack in women of the necessary aptitudes for taking charge of a family. It is still found in the legal codes of various Latin American countries.

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COMMUNISM IN HARLEM

by Cornel West

Communists in Harlem During the Depression by Mark Naison. New York: Grove Press, 1985. 384 pp., $6.95.

Mark Naison's book is a major contribution to our understanding of the complex dynamics of black Harlem's participation in the Communist Party/USA from 1928 to 1941. The primary aim of the work is to modify the pervasive view of Communist manipulation and betrayal of black American activists and interests put forward by Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Harold Cruse, Wilson Record, and others. Naison acknowledges the strong Soviet control of the party, yet he also recognizes that this control, though generally negative for the party, had some positive effects for Communist struggles against racism in America. Furthermore, this pervasive control was not exhaustive; rather, some marginal space was created for limited innovative black political activity in the party.

This modest argument has earned the chagrin of the dean of Cold War Communist historiography, Theodore Draper. In two blistering articles in *The New York Review of Books* (May 9 and 30), Draper attacked Naison and a host of other leftist historians for waging an "academic campaign for the rehabilitation of American Communism." Yet nothing could be further from the truth in the case of Naison. His aim is to build on the insights of Draper, Cruse, and others, while also critically examining some of their blindnesses—blindnesses that flow from the ideological axes they were out to grind.

The achievements of the party regarding racism in America are well known: the creation of the first interracial space in U.S.

Cornel West is associate professor of the philosophy of religion at Yale Divinity School.

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political culture, the broad radicalization of a significant segment of the middle-class black intelligentsia, the trade unionization of many skilled and unskilled black workers, and the crucial support of black efforts to make lynching, police brutality, and legal injustice salient issues in U.S. life. These achievements may seem quite small given Communist aims of fundamentally transforming U.S. society and thereby eliminating racism. And certainly it was in the interests of a Soviet-controlled U.S. Communist Party to pursue these goals. Yet looking through the lens of black Americans, it is an important fact of U.S. life that the first attempt of a political movement to create and sustain an interracial community (including the touchy personal spheres of sexual and social relations) was undertaken not by Christians, socialists, feminists, liberals, or populists, but by Communists. Early Communist interracial efforts were expanded and enlarged at the command of Soviet leaders. This command focused on black self-determination of a suppressed "nation" in the South. Yet it resulted in Communist participation in crucial black struggles against discrimination and police brutality throughout the country.

And though the first generation of black Communists was made up predominantly of West Indians (Cyril Briggs, Richard Moore, Otto Huiswoud) with revolutionary nationalist sentiments, they were soon replaced by upwardly mobile middle-class black Americans (James Ford, Benjamin Davis, Theodore Bassett) eager to use their energies in status positions commensurate with their talents, outraged by their delimited opportunities owing to the rampant racism in U.S. society, and impatient with the parochialism of Afro-American life, especially its churches. The interracialism of the party—much like the subculture in universities and Bohemian communities today—attracted middle-class black Americans yet kept working-class and poor blacks at a distance.

As Naison rightly points out, this distance was as much cultural as ideological and political. This interracialism, which entailed a willingness to support black struggles, gained the party many black sympathizers, but those who actually joined were primarily middle-class professionals, trade-unionized skilled workers, and marginal plebeian intellectuals, who had mastered the skills of Marxist rhetoric and organizational mobilization. In addition, the black cadre was more male than female—owing, in part, to the fact that black men tend to move to white women more quickly than black women to white men in U.S. interracial practice. In

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short, the secular Marxist discourse, organizational emphases, and complex exogamous relations were simply too much for the black masses (many of whom were recent rural migrants) to bear.

This middle-class bias is seen most clearly in a major source of the party's attraction to black Americans: the popularization of black cultural productions. Despite the attempts to support and promote black music and theater, the party shunned the culture of the black masses. It excluded musical comedy and vaudeville, remained highly ambiguous in its attitude toward jazz and the blues, and often displayed open contempt toward the playful character and participatory responses of popular black performers and their audiences. In short, the cultural tastes and life of the party simply could not tolerate the everyday life of most black people—though it attracted elements of the black middle class and stable working class.

Black Harlem's activity in the party peaked in 1939, when there were over 1,000 members. This peak had much to do with the practical political activity of the party, which focused on particular issues—unemployment, job discrimination, housing, the Scottsboro and Herndon cases—during the popular front period. Yet black suspicion of the party was reinforced by the Italian invasion of Ethiopia (1934-45) during which the Soviet Union refused to halt trade with Mussolini, and by the establishment of the National Negro Congress (1935), which influential black leader A. Philip Randolph denounced as a pernicious Communist puppet organization after its third convention in 1940. This suspicion escalated after the party's infamous flip-flop before and after the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939 and the German invasion of the Soviet Union less than two years later.

By 1941 the party in Harlem was a tolerated yet integral part of the community, with its outstanding members quite visible—including Benjamin Davis, who was twice elected city councilman from the district. But the party was marginal as a political organization. To the degree to which party members functioned as progressive trade unionists, public officials, and activists on local issues, they were welcome; but when they raised the red flag concerning Marxist ideology and Soviet foreign policy, they were ignored.

Regarding black-Jewish relations in the party—an issue highlighted by Cruse and Black Power spokespersons in the 1960s—Naison points out that this issue rarely surfaced during the Depression. This was so because Jewish Communists, who were highly

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disproportionate in the party as a whole and were also predominant among whites in the Harlem section, downplayed their ethnic identity in line with the assimilationist ethos of the party. Since black interaction with any whites was so novel, little attention was given to ethnic distinctions among whites. This would change by the late 1930s and 1940s, given the visibility of Father Coughlin's anti-Semitic movement, the revelation of the Holocaust, and the establishment of the state of Israel. Yet it is an important fact of the U.S. left that Jewish Communists have remained more universalist, internationalist, and assimilationist than most other American Jews since the Second World War.

What, then, are the pertinent lessons to draw from Naison's impressive study for the present struggle against racism in U.S. society and the U.S. left? First, we must be sensitive to the *cultural expressions of class and strata divisions* among black Americans. Interracial political struggle is more culturally amenable to middle-class and some stable working-class black Americans. This does not mean that exclusivistic nationalist sentiments guide the black working poor and underclass—in fact, Christian and Islamic moral universalism dominate much of their perspectives. But it does mean that black organizational contexts (outside or within predominantly white leftist groups) attract a larger cross section of black Americans because they feel more free to be themselves and are less intimidated by privileged articulate white leftists.

Second, we must give up the dream that secular sensibilities are requisite for leftist political activity. Those who cling to such a Eurocentric model cannot but be immobilized pessimists of the first order. Rather, we must try to tap those progressive elements in religious symbolism and language, then conjoin these elements with flexible Marxist analyses of liberal capitalist America.

Lastly, we should realize that most black Americans are suspicious of white people, be they radicals, liberals, or conservatives. Yet the trust of black Americans can be won by principled and protracted struggles over issues in which racism plays a role. We are witnessing such a building of trust between black and white radicals in the antiapartheid movement. As these bonds of trust develop and grow, reciprocal black support in feminist, ecological, and anti-homophobic struggles within the context of anticapitalist and anti-imperialist perspectives may result in positive achievements over and beyond those of the gallant efforts of Communists in Harlem during the Depression.

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A QUIET VIOLENCE

by Cheryl Payer

A Quiet Violence: View from a Bangladesh Village, by Betsy Hartmann and James Boyce. San Francisco: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1983. $9.95.

Most village studies from the third world are produced by anthropologists with a self-conscious theoretical agenda. The product is too often a dry study filled with rigid categories which reinforce our prejudices about exotic people with strange customs. *A Quiet Violence* was written by two young North Americans who lived in a Bangladesh village for several months in 1975. They have produced an almost novelistic account of their friends and neighbors in the village they call Katni. Their very readable prose, freshened with extraordinarily vivid details, draws the reader into this little world.

Yet Hartmann and Boyce's style masks a carefully disciplined ordering of the raw materials of their village observations, supplemented with research in the usual scholarly sources of information. In the first part of the book, a chapter on the history of Bengal and Bangladesh is followed by the history of Katni village as told by the village leader, Aktar Ali. "Katni was unusual in one respect: its leaders were peasants of modest means rather than rich men," the authors note. The reader may guess that this was one reason their contact, a government agricultural official known for his honesty, suggested Katni as a place of residence.

The chapters that follow show us the life of the women and children of Katni, and give us portraits of a landlord; rich, middle, and poor peasants; and a landless laborer. After they have intro-

Cheryl Payer is the author of *The Debt Trap* and *The World Bank: A Critical Analysis* both published by Monthly Review Press.

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duced us to the village and the variety of its residents, the authors sketch the economic relationships among the villagers themselves and those that link the village to the national and international network of markets.

The picture that emerges from this book is of a people who are engaged in an unrelenting struggle for existence, not with nature (for, as the authors point out at the very beginning, the land is extremely fertile and the climate usually benign), but with their fellow villagers and the landlords, merchants, and government officials and soldiers who live outside its boundaries but impinge on its well-being:

> The villagers of Katni divide society into two broad classes: *chotolok* and *borolok,* literally "little people" and "big people." *Chotolok* are peasants and workers, the poor, the illiterate, the powerless. *Borolok* are defined by the villagers as "people who sit and eat," people whose wealth, education and political influence give them a sense of natural superiority.

It is this struggle for existence that gives the book its title; the landless laborer profiled in one chapter died, from sheer lack of food, during the authors' stay in Katni.

The women's lot is unenviable. The majority of the villagers, as of most Bangladeshis, are Moslems, whose women are subject to purdah and are thus not allowed to work in the fields or travel to the market. The women even lose their own names when they marry, and are thereafter identified only by their relationship to husband and son: Jolil's wife, Annis's mother. Wife-beating is routine; the villagers could hardly believe that Jim Boyce did not beat his wife.

And yet the dominant impression left by the book is not of fatalistic submission, but of children laughing, neighbors visiting and chatting with each other and helping when they can, of people who can enjoy life even while working hard and keeping a wary eye out for the "big people" who want to steal their land, goods, and labor.

The authors promised on their arrival that they would not try to change the village, that they were not missionaries or "developers." Yet inevitably they themselves were drawn into local dramas and quarrels, and found themselves lending money to buy drugs for a sick baby, traveling to town to get birth control information for the village women, defending villagers, by their very presence, against raids by the police.

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Simply by respecting the people of Katni and listening to their views and impressions, Hartmann and Boyce made discoveries that contradict received opinion on the third world. The villagers love children, but they were desperate for means and information about birth control as well; it is the insularity and indifference of government workers rather than peasant "traditionalism" which blocks the diffusion of family planning techniques.

The authors' earlier study of the appropriation of a World Bank-financed tubewell and their essay on the impact of foreign aid on Bangladesh have been widely circulated and reprinted since 1978.[1] A short version of the present book, entitled *Needless Hunger,* was issued by the same publisher in 1979.[2] After a long wait we now have the full-length study of Katni village, which like the earlier booklet is an excellent introduction to the life of peasant families, and to the causes of poverty and hunger in the third world.

NOTES

1. Betsy Hartmann and James Boyce, *Bangladesh: Aid to the Needy?* (Washington: Center for International Policy, 1978).
2. Betsy Hartmann and James Boyce, *Needless Hunger: Voices from a Bangladesh Village* (San Francisco: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1979).

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BURIED TREASURE

by Annette T. Rubinstein

Rope of Gold by Josephine Herbst. Old Westbury, NY: The Feminist Press, 1984. 449 pp. $8.95.

The Feminist Press has performed a very real service in reprinting *Rope of Gold,* the final volume of Josephine Herbst's significant trilogy. When it first appeared in the 1930s the book was often justly compared to Dos Passos's major work, the three-part *U.S.A.* While it does not have the same importance for literary history as that innovative achievement, its long burial must be explained in terms of its greater political depth as well as its less dazzling style.

Josephine Herbst was neither a poetic nor a dramatic novelist. Like Dreiser she achieved her effect by the slow accretion of a multitude of well-chosen incidents and details, no one of which removed from the total structure gives any idea of the whole. Yet, again as in Dreiser, that structure is finally so substantial and solidly based that we cannot remember, or even imagine, its piecemeal emergence.

The entire trilogy—*Pity Is Not Enough* (1932), *The Executioner Waits* (1934), and *Rope of Gold* (1939)—follows the fortunes of three generations of the Trexlers, an average midwestern family, from the Civil War through the Great Depression. A review in the *New Republic* of 22 March 1939, published when the final volume appeared, said in part:

This latest novel presents a chaotic America and the tragic or broken lives that men and women are leading here—presents these

Annette T. Rubinstein currently teaches at the New York Marxist School. She is the author of *The Great Tradition in English Literature: From Shakespeare to Shaw* (Monthly Review Press, 1969) and a forthcoming companion volume, *American Literature and Its Roots.*

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things from some central vision clearly more passionate and more tragic than anything spoken or acted in the narration.

That central vision is both humanist and Marxist. Herbst gives us no extraordinary figures, real or imaginary, but she does communicate her profound sense of some elusive spirit, some individual choice of values, some undetermined freedom of personal decision, in a surprising variety of ordinary characters. Yet her major concern, like Dos Passos's, is to convey a sense of the socioeconomic world which shapes her people's lives. One could fairly apply to her entire trilogy Auden's lines—

> And now no path on which we move
> But shows already traces of
> Intentions not our own, . . .

Of course this also applies, *a fortiori,* to Dos Passos's work, but there is a vast difference between the "we" in those lines and the implicit "they" of *U.S.A.* In that entire trilogy it is almost impossible to feel that anyone outside of the historical figures is alive in the same sense as the author. In Herbst's less brilliant work there is a serious and successful attempt to experience people as they experience themselves, a sober respect for the possibilities of ordinary human beings, an understanding of the subtle dialectic between social causation and individual responsibility.

The central figures in the last volume of the Herbst trilogy are Victoria Wendel, Anne Trexler's daughter, and the young man she marries, Jonathan Chance. Both characters are closely modeled on the author's own experience, and Jonathan's wealthy background provides an opportunity for an untendentious contrast of personal relationships in upper- and lower-middle-class families.

A great literary critic, the Hungarian-Jewish Marxist Gyorgy Lukács, said one sign of Tolstoi's genius was his realization that life is always more various and surprising than the imagination of the greatest novelist. Herbst too realized this and used it to good effect. Victoria, like her author, is a radical journalist; her husband, like Herbst's, becomes an active Communist Party member; their experience and that of their intimates naturally involves eyewitness accounts of Nazism, farm organization, sit-in strikes, and, finally, the abortive Cuban uprising of 1937.

The book also involves questions more apparent to radicals now than on its original publication, questions that few Communists then took seriously. The position of women in left circles,

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problems related to the growing dependence on machinery, inner party commandism, the dangers entailed by a manipulative attitude, however necessary or well-intentioned—all these matters of serious concern to a later generation of radicals are raised, albeit somewhat tentatively, in this volume.

The vicissitudes of time have increased the relevance of some factual material as well as the emphasis on these theoretical considerations. Like other readers of the novel on its first appearance forty-five years ago, I was most deeply stirred by the account the author had given pride of place in her last chapter—an account of a young factory worker's participation in one of the earliest sit-in strikes. Almost all of us shared his triumphant certainty that this was the irreversible beginning of a new era.

Few if any North American radicals then paid equal attention to the two penultimate chapters. These dealt with Victoria's assignment to visit a remote Cuban province and report on the struggle of a small group of poor coffee farmers against the sugar companies which were attempting to take over their land. Her mission was finally successful, but the uprising is tragically defeated. Yet despite the wisdom of more sophisticated colleagues, Victoria shares the coffee workers' stubborn faith in a successful resurgence of their struggle, and in its importance for the world. As soon as she returned to the mainland

she sat down and began hammering the typewriter keys. It was like an antidote, the harder she struck the keys, the calmer she became. She pushed back everything, way back, and as if this might be the last deed she would ever do, as if the gun had already been mounted and were training upon that very room, she finished, stuffed the long envelope, put on the airmail stamp and dropped it in the box.

The chapter ends with her long bus ride north through the decaying aftermath of the Florida real estate boom. Exhausted, she sits without thinking, watching "the bus run into daylight. The road and fields were solid ground and the objects of the earth like sleepy animals were rising to their knees."

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CORRESPONDENCE

ON INDIA AND MEXICO

by Firdaus Jhabvala

I returned to India for the first time in eighteen years last January. India is much more united than before and there is a clearly Indian character emerging from the mosaic of different peoples, races, languages, religions, etc. that constitute present-day India. It was heartening to see Bengalis in Mysore, Kashmiris and Punjabis in Madras, South Indians in Delhi, and so on. The national market and government have been cementing together an Indianness that has been missing and that is sorely needed within the structure. When I was a schoolboy I remember my school friends all telling me that it didn't really matter if China took the Himalayas or not, since they were far away. In college, my Marathi friends were not excessively bothered by the war with Pakistan (1965) since the fighting was going on in Rajasthan, we were in Bombay, and probably the Pakis would bash up the Gujaratis (deservedly, some thought). I am sure this has changed. India is further away from tribalism and closer to nationhood in a part of the world where nations and countries don't last (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka now, etc.). I think it is fair to say that Indian nationalism will assert itself more and more. People from all walks of life told me the same thing over and over again: "India comes first, and then we will see about the rest." So I think we have an emerging national force in the third world—perhaps not as audacious as China, but coming along.

India is going to be a more capitalist country also. It has an impressive entrepreneurial class and is going through what seems

Firdaus Jhabvala received his Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania and now directs the Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones del Sureste, in Tabasco, Mexico.

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to me to be the preliminaries of a rude "only the fittest survive" capitalist system. It is rapidly urbanizing. Bombay is a veritable slum, Calcutta not as much a slum as I had imagined, Madras is following the two bigger cities—all three affected by rural and political migration. And then there is Delhi, the only Indian city maintained in a curiously un-Indian state by the central government, almost against its natural self, perhaps because of the diplomats.

The nationhood aspect and the capitalism India has chosen are intricately tied together, but in the long run are at loggerheads. India is in a part of the world where revolutionary changes have swept away ideological debris—in China, East Asia, and the USSR. In India change came easily, via Gandhi. The British did away with thuggery, infanticide, wife-burning, etc. All this during Lord William Bentinck's time (some 140 years ago). As you know, all our great murder routines are back again in independent India and in 1985! So, Barrington Moore's thesis on India is correct: Non-violent change left a lot of ideological debris drifting around that hinders the movement of the society and tends to channel revolutionary change into regional, linguistic, religious, or other issues. Capitalists don't actively advocate these differences, but it seems to be clear enough that while they are around no clear class issue can be presented. This is where nationalism and capitalism will clash. It has not happened yet, but it will; and I fear that capitalism will win out, at least in a substantial portion of Indian territory.

The farm situation is better than it was eighteen years ago. There is immense traffic with the Gulf countries—a great civilizing project for both India and the Gulf. The educational system is still as solid as when the British imported education. I think India has what is needed to solve its problems of poverty and misery. Urban misery and beggary are appalling, but in a large measure it is rural India coming to the cities, a possibility it did not have before. We were chased by lepers in Mysore, surprised by a human quadruped in Hyderabad, and witnessed the most gory human mutilations imaginable in Bombay. Yet the smaller towns and villages of west, south, and north India we visited were not this way. They were poor, but decently poor. In east India, the Left Front has done a decent job in West Bengal; Bihari villages are not as destitute as I had thought. Slowly, they are moving forward.

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Indian industries make a large percentage of the machines the country uses, and the foreign debt is not large. I visited the Tata steel works, a neighboring engineering plant in Jamshedpur, Bihar (East India)—all quite modern and flourishing, with Indian technology. In this sense, Asian capitalism has depended on local technology to develop the productive forces (especially labor) much more than Latin American exploitative capitalism. Also dependency on the transnationals is less, much less, in India than in Mexico. So I left with immensely mixed feelings. I don't think Indian nationalism will take the form of protecting inefficient capitalism in its dependent form, as in Mexico, for example. The lack of natural resources obviates that possibility. But I don't know how the nationalism-capitalism dialectic will work out.

Mexico is rapidly tiring itself out, paying over 10 percent of its GNP to foreign banks. The system is using up its political capital to sweat out the economic capital to keep the foreign banks happy. So Mexico is the banks' example to the rest of the third world. The petty bourgeoisie is quite upset that the national pie is not growing, and feels it has more to gain by moving to the right. The bourgeoisie is also worried that the ruling system may not be able to hold the line in a class war and may sacrifice some of its interests. These two groups form the New Right, especially in the north and in parts of the conservative center of the country.

The crisis is effectively dividing the country, and there seems to be no hurry to stop the transferral of the surplus to Western banks. So the whole country is working to save to pay the interest on the debt. The present regime of Harvard/Yale-educated technocrats is hell bent on paying up. So I don't know what will happen here—guerrillas in the south, *gringos* in the north, and a huge debt hanging over everyone's head. The existing structure is bound to break up. There seems to be so little to fall back upon. Everything is transnationalized, and the model of appropriation in the sphere of distribution is superseding that of production. As a result, the productive forces are being crippled. At the present time the best business in town is speculation—always against the Mexican economy.

The oil business is getting worse, and the best oilfields have apparently been overworked in the period leading up to the bust (1977-82). Tabasco's production is falling and so is that of Chia-

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pas, so the heavy off-shore crude is being pumped out as fast as possible. There are no big oilfields being found to replace those that are closing down, so oil production will probably drop in a year or two. There is no other productive activity of importance to the world economy, so Mexico will really get hit by a super crisis in a few years' time. It has all sorts of import and dollar needs and has no way to keep up these imports. The crisis here has to deepen and keep on deepening until the model gets busted at the seams. A lively bunch of national capitalists would have begun pushing toward reduced payments on the debt, but we don't have them around here; so, sheepishly, Mexico is handing over the dollars needed to keep its wobbly industrial apparatus going. The system is slowly committing hara-kiri as it gets rid of some of its most able people ("bloated" or "inflated" bureaucracy, as it might be called by the *New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal*). The government has gone in for neoliberal policies, and soon we shall be having our first bouts of real unrest. I have been reading John Kenneth Turner's account of Mexico on the eve of the last revolution (*Barbarous Mexico*), and so much has not changed—although so much has changed. That time, the people really put up with a lot before breaking loose. We don't have much experience of these things, and even less of revolutionary overthrowals of bourgeois-dominated peasant revolutions.

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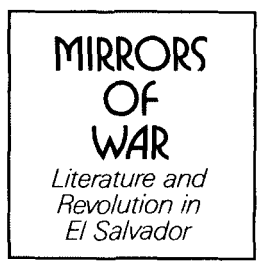

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(Continued from inside front cover)

level and prestige of Cavtat to the point where one of this year's participants could without too much exaggeration refer to the roundtables as the nearest thing that now exists to a real socialist international. An extensive selection of the papers prepared for this year's meeting has been published (in English) under the title *Socialism on the Threshold of the Twenty-first Century* by Verso in London and is distributed in this country by Schocken Books (311 pp., $22.50).

Most MR readers are by now aware that we are engaged in a more or less continuing fundraising drive focused primarily on a series of events calculated to bring supporters together for what we hope will be educational as well as pleasurable experiences. One such—a particularly successful one—was a brunch held on Sunday, December 1, at the Beach House Mexican Restaurant (399 Greenwich Street in the Tribeca area of Manhattan), which contributed the excellent food and drink. The guest of honor was Bernard Sanders, the socialist mayor of Burlington, Vermont, who presented the eighty-odd attendants with a marvelously down-to-earth and at the same time politically sophisticated analysis of the Burlington experience (for background see "Burlington, Vermont: Socialism on the Local Level?" by Beth Bates, MR, May 1985). We hope Bernie will find the time to write up the notes from which he spoke for publication in an early issue of MR. In the meantime, we can say that we—and we think most of those present—came away with the strong impression that the time is ripe for bold radical initiatives on the local level, and that much can be learned from what has been accomplished during the last five years in Burlington—though it is important to add that the mayor himself is careful to point out that conditions vary widely from one area to another and that there isn't (and shouldn't be) anything like a generally valid "model" to be copied.

In this same connection, it is a pleasure to be able to inform MR readers that the November municipal elections in New Haven, Connecticut, provided further evidence of the viability of local radical initiatives. A fuller account will have to wait until more details are available, but the salient facts are that about six months ago a small group of New Haven residents, mostly environmentalists and peace activists, formed a local Green Party. With elections scheduled for November, they asked Rick Wolff, economics professor at the University of Massachusetts who has written for MR from time to time, to run for mayor. They chose well. Rick has been active in New Haven politics and the city's labor movement for many years, and served as advisor to the successful strike of Yale's nonacademic employees last year. A vigorous campaign for mayor and aldermen, focused on urgent local issues, was mounted; and to the surprise of everyone (including the candidates themselves) the Green Party won an even 10 percent of the vote, running very close to the second-place Republicans in a traditionally Democratic city—in fact out-polling the Republicans in 11 of the city's 30 wards. The Greens are now assured of a place on the ballot in future elections. Was their strong 1985 showing a flash in the pan or a harbinger of things to come? If Bernie Sanders' political analysis is correct, there may be more surprises not only in New Haven but in many other communities around the country.

There will be a party to celebrate the publication of MR Press's new book by Elizabeth Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars: Life and Culture on the Lower East Side, 1890-1925*, at St. Marks in the Bowery on Saturday, January 11, 7-10 p.m. Sponsors are MR Press, the New Feminist Library, and the Community Documentation Workshop.

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by

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